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Strength of quietnes

THE STRENGTH
OF QUIETNESS



ROBERT SERVICE
STEEN

AP



**THE
STRENGTH OF QUIETNESS
AND OTHER SERMONS**





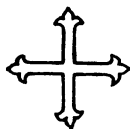
Robert Service Steen

THE STRENGTH OF QUIETNESS

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

ROBERT SERVICE STEEN



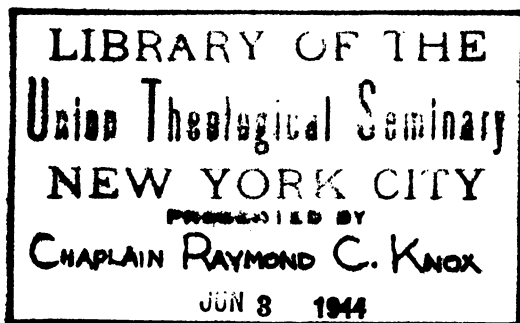
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Robert Service Steen

1880-1908

PASTOR HILLSIDE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH, ORANGE, NEW JERSEY
SEPTEMBER 1907 — APRIL 1908

Life

ROBERT SERVICE STEEN was born at Wysox, Pennsylvania, May 5, 1880. He was the eldest child of the Reverend William Service Steen and Ellen Ewing Hallock and was reared in a home where Christian faith was splendidly vigorous and consecration to the kingdom of God all-controlling. He attended the Hamilton School in Philadelphia and entered Princeton College in the class of 1901, where his modesty kept him from becoming widely known until his lovable personality drew his classmates to him and his great abilities forced him into prominence, particularly in the field of debating. He was a member of three intercollegiate teams and was awarded the Coubertin medal. His college friends speak of his self-forgetfulness,

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his pluck, his ready repartee, — “the lightning flashes of his brain,” — his gift of striking and picturesque expression, his manifest sincerity.

At graduation he accepted a position as instructor in the Syrian Protestant College at Beirut; and besides winning for himself the firm attachment of many of the Americans in the community, he became, as one of his colleagues describes it, the centre of a small coterie of hero-worshippers among the boys. His three years' experience in Syria added vastly to his equipment as an interpreter of the Bible, as occasional references to the local setting of an incident in his sermons show, and his close contact with the varied types represented in his classes contributed to that knowledge of human nature and breadth of sympathy which were later so often remarked by those who knew him as a pastor. He became an enthusiast for

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the College, prepared a small text-book in geography for one of its classes after his return to this country, and more than once thought seriously of going back and spending his life in its service.

While at Beirut he finally decided to prepare for the ministry, and entered Union Theological Seminary in the autumn of 1904. Here he proved himself a brilliant scholar, gaining among other honours the Hitchcock Prize for an essay in Church History and graduating *magna cum laude*, and he was regarded by faculty and students as an exceptionally gifted preacher and as destined to wield a wide influence in the Church. He not only maintained the Seminary's best standards in scholarship, but he threw himself into its life, caught its point of view clearly, agreed heartily with its fundamental convictions, was devoted to its teachers and in his

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short ministry uttered its positive message and embodied its ideals and spirit.

During his first year at the Seminary he commenced the work under the Presbytery of New York which has since grown into the Van Nest Presbyterian Church ; in his first vacation he supplied the pulpit of the Church of the Covenant in Washington, D. C., where his ministry was highly valued and his unusual talents recognised ; and in the following winter he volunteered as a worker in the Spring Street Presbyterian Church of New York City. At the close of his second year he became the assistant minister of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, preaching during the summer and working with conspicuous usefulness and constantly growing popularity among young and old in the congregation. Wherever he went he left

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the impression of a broad-minded, big-hearted, self-effacing Christian gentleman.

As his Seminary course and the year in the Madison Avenue Church drew to a close, a number of positions at home and abroad sought him. After much conscientious thought he accepted the pastorate of the Hillside Presbyterian Church of Orange, New Jersey, where he was ordained and installed September 30, 1907. His ministry was as rich as it was brief. "In a short time he fulfilled a long time." His people were amazed at the rapidity with which he gained their confidence, their affection, their honour, and at the intensity of their devotion to him. They were surprised at his maturity, at the tact with which he invariably said and did the most fitting thing under any circumstances, at the leadership this seemingly diffident and retiring young

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man was at once unconsciously accorded in all the activities of a large and thriving parish, and at the esteem in which he was so soon held by the community outside. Older people were astonished to find themselves taking their problems and giving their confidences to a young man of twenty-seven, trusting implicitly in his judgment, deferring to his modestly expressed opinion and receiving from him a sympathy and an understanding they had not ventured to expect. Although very reserved he had a marvellous faculty of giving himself to those who came to him for inspiration and comfort. He had a clearly defined ideal for his church, but he had that rare quality of leadership which enabled him to guide his people without their being aware that they were led.

Along with his rapid development into full manhood he retained the heart of a

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boy, and he ministered to the children of his parish with an ability which amounted to genius. Every Sunday morning the sermon was preceded by a brief address to them, often from an object which he had brought into the pulpit, and while the children were charmed into rapt attention and learned lessons they could not forget, their seniors frequently felt that if they had heard no more that morning they had enough to inspire them to Christian thinking and Christian living. In everything that he said or did he was absolutely natural and transparently genuine. As he combined in his own nature a delightfully keen sense of humour with the utmost reverence, so in his conduct of public worship he mingled playfulness and solemnity, bringing a smile to the faces of the congregation by a remark to the children, and lifting their souls to the very presence of the Most High by a prayer. Perhaps

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his prayers are the most memorable elements in his public ministry. They captured the minds and exalted the hearts of those who heard them by their beauty of expression, their depth of thought, their revelation of a rich Christian experience, their scope, which seemed to embrace all the needs of everyone present, their reality, which made the Father as actual to those who followed as He was to him who was leading them into His secret place; and they possessed the peculiar power of making each individual feel that it was his own mood which was being voiced, as though this man of God knew what was in him. His sermons, as will be readily seen by those who read the selections printed in this volume, were vital messages from one who used a keen intellect, a clear, direct, and simple style, a broad culture, a social passion, an evangelical training and his own fascinating, sane, earnest

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personality to convey to those in whom he was intensely interested that which he believed with his whole heart and soul and mind concerning Him who was his all-in-all. When one recalls that they are taken, not from a ministry of many years, but of less than seven months; that they have received practically no revision; that the speaker's magnetic and engaging presence, pleasant voice and eager and fervid though quiet delivery gave them a power which the printed page cannot reproduce; and that they were prepared in the necessarily crowded weeks when a young minister in his first charge was familiarising himself with the work of his parish and getting to know his people, their remarkable character will be appreciated. They are original, suggestive, always interesting; they are expressed in conversational language with the charm of naturalness without descending to the

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commonplace; they are eminently Christian. Their fundamental message may be compressed into a sentence: the religious experience of Jesus was the supreme authority for him, and his one aim was that Christ might be formed in those to whom he was preaching, His filial spirit towards God expressing itself in fraternal service for all men.

This short memorial volume will serve to preserve for those who knew him the inspiration which contact with him always brought. But it can convey very inadequately an impression of the man. He was a son of God to whom calm trust in the Father and self-sacrificing devotion to the brotherhood seemed to be natural, whose point of view and sympathies were invariably dominated by the spirit of Christ, who was as able as he was humble and as human as he was godly. Doubtless he had his struggles of soul, but no one was

aware of them or saw any scars of the conflict. He had one of those capacious natures to whom all things true and honourable and just and lovely—nature and books and work and, above all, human beings of every age and condition — bring keen delight. His mind was exceedingly fertile, and into every address he made he packed ideas “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.” He had an extraordinary power of drawing out the best in every person he met and of winning an intense affection. It did one good to be with him. Earth was richer for many of us while it numbered him in its population, and heaven seems more to be desired now that he is among its citizens. Those who knew him best cannot feel that the transition from the one to the other was difficult for him, he seemed so truly at home with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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“He scarce had need to doff his pride or slough
the dross of Earth —
E’en as he walked that day to God so walked he
from his birth,
In simpleness and gentleness and honour and clean
mirth.”

HENRY SLOANE COFFIN.

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The Strength of Quietness

The Strength of Quietness

ISAIAH 30: 7, 15. *Their strength is to sit still. In quietness . . . shall be your strength.*

ISAIAH seems here to be dealing in contradictions. One does not usually associate strength with sitting still. Strength suggests speed, alertness, independence of narrow limits. Power means motion, energy, rapidity. To be strong is most commonly to be active. To sit still generally seems to be a confession of weakness or indifference. Quietness is too often laziness, or lack of initiative, or fatigue, or any other of a number of things that are associated in our minds with the negative side of life. Those who sit still are spectators upon whom we look as people incapable of contributing anything of real value to life.

The Strength of Quietness

Isaiah is speaking about Egypt, whose help Jerusalem is seeking as a safeguard against foreign invasion. He very strongly disapproves of the proposed treaty and urges his people to maintain their independence of action, to break off all agreements and to depend solely upon their own resources and the assistance of Jehovah. The alliance from which they hope so much will prove a disappointment. Egypt will never come to their rescue, for she is the "proud one that sitteth still." Her strength is in her independence and her ability to hold aloof.

Jerusalem must learn the same secret. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Not through foreign alliances with heathen neighbours shall the city be delivered, not by flight upon Egyptian horses shall its inhabitants be saved; in quiet reliance upon God they

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shall find security, for "their strength is to sit still." Strength through quietness, through sitting still, must have seemed a desperate expedient to the people to whom Isaiah spoke, but the prophet knew that in such a course of inaction was their only assurance of safety.

We do not need to look far around us to find people whose lives are ruled by this spirit of quietness, whose strength it is to sit still. There are children of God upon whom He has let come weakness of body, such as makes all active service impossible. Perhaps from childhood they have been set apart from the heat and burden of the day, bearing in quietness their own burden of pain. They have no chance to go out and fight life's battles, to right life's wrongs or even to earn its simplest necessities. They seem cut off from the everyday ties that men and women form who join forces in

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the same cause. The great continents of opportunity, which others are called to explore and settle, are shut off from them by deep seas of suffering. They are forced to dwell on tiny islands, so small and circumscribed as scarcely to afford them living room. For them action is impossible; "their strength is to sit still."

Or, perhaps, it has not always been so; life used to mean for them much more than this, but slowly they have found themselves shut in. The years have built their barrier around them and weakness has taken from them the power to resist. Hands grow incapable of accustomed tasks; feet can no longer carry them along well-worn paths. They become onlookers upon life, spectators of events in which they would once have been actors; compelled to see much of the world through the eyes of others and to hear at second hand

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the busy hum of life. They may make plans, but they know that they cannot execute them. They have been strong to act in the days that are gone, strong to work in office, or factory, or home; strong to lift other people's loads; but now "their strength is to sit still," perhaps within a single room, by the familiar window.

And strength it is, that bravest of all courage, the strength of patient endurance. For them were written the true words of old John Milton on his blindness :

" God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts, who best
Bear his milde yoaik, they serve him best his State
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o're Land and Ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and waite."

Their strength is not the dogged courage of the condemned but the un-failing freshness of spirit of those who

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never sit alone, whose quiet chambers have become dwelling-places of their Father's spirit, who have about them some hidden source from which they draw contentment, whose hearts rejoice in Him who 'leadeth them beside the still waters.'

“ And, if the eye must fail of light,
The ear forget to hear,
Make clearer still the spirit's sight,
More fine the inward ear ! ”

In the lives of those whose days are spent in sitting still there is added often to the courage of endurance and the power of insight the strength of influence. There are invalids in whose quiet bravery are the secrets of other people's victories. Forbidden to act for themselves, they express themselves through the lives of those whom they touch. Merely to sit with them is a tonic to hearts that are run down. If

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our lips often bring them news from the world that lies beyond their doors, how often they seem to give us tidings of that larger world in which to eyes of faith are revealed "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

When we who walk and run grow weary and faint, we turn to these whom God has bidden to sit still. If we have been cowardly, their courage shames us. If we are worried and distraught, by a blessed contagion we catch their peace. They take us out of ourselves, their heart's experience becomes a window through which we look out and up and behold our Father. One such life miraculously multiplies itself in the activities of those who circle around it, and the years of quiet endurance which sometimes seem to be such sheer waste may be filled with the most precious results through the work of someone

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whose purposes, by a sort of vicarious suffering, have been kept pure and upright.

There are bonds other than those of sickness and age that shut us in, that contract the circle of life and bid us, against our will, sit still. Sometimes we find ourselves caged in by the narrowness of our opportunities. We want big tasks to do, problems to face that will bring us into touch with the great currents of the world. We want to count as factors in the larger life of our day and generation. But such opportunities never come our way, however wistfully we may view them from a distance. Shut in on every side by our very limited surroundings, we are made to sit still.

We may be bound by the claims of those who are dependent on us, so that we are never free for the larger things of which we feel ourselves to be capable.

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Life has become a routine of daily service for others within the little circle of the home. Children must be cared for, old people must be looked after, and, when we have done our daily work and met the claims of these family duties, we are "used up" and there is not enough of us left to go very far in church work or social service or the other interests that call us. To others with more freedom, lives bound by such ties to sit still seem cramped and narrow. But in their quietness is power; "their strength is to sit still." Like still waters they run deep beneath the quiet surface, and by hidden channels transmit power to the hands and hearts of others.

Strong John Lawrence, who was England's tower of strength in the days of the Indian mutiny, the right man in the right place at the critical time, would never have been there if it had not been for the influence of his invalid sister

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Letitia. A woman of unusual insight and strength of mind, it was her advice and entreaties that sent the youthful John into the Indian Civil Service, much against his own inclination. His love for her led him to follow her counsel, and, through him, Letitia Lawrence on her couch at home made herself felt beyond the seas and helped to save India for England.

There was once in a small town in the hill-country of Ephraim a woman named Hannah, who sat quietly at home, except for the short journey once a year to sacrifice at Shiloh. Her peaceful, uneventful life seemed destined to count for very little; but Hannah had a son for whom she hoped such high things that from his birth she devoted him to the Lord. And Samuel's hands and head and heart carried into all the public life of his day the high purposes of his quiet mother.

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“ So like a sword the son shall roam,
On nobler missions sent;
And as the smith remained at home,
In peaceful turret pent,
So sits the while at home the mother well content.”

Our Master Jesus Christ chose to live a very limited life. “ Strong Son of God ” though He was, He frankly accepted the ordinary limitations of our humanity. He “ took upon Him the form of a servant.” Shut away in one corner of the world, among a people who had little direct influence upon the political fortunes of their times, handicapping himself by His meagre opportunities and purposely limiting His activities to a narrow radius, He did His work. In quietness and in confidence was His strength. Much of His influence over His followers arose from His power to sit still.

There was first the stillness of preparation. For thirty years He was content

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with the hills of Nazareth, with the quiet work and the fragrant wood of the carpenter shop, with the simple life of the Jewish home, six days of toil and on the seventh the silence of the Sabbath and the service of the synagogue. To the hills above the town He must often have climbed in the afternoons and from their tops looked out upon the plain of Galilee, where all the great battles of His nation's history had been fought. Below him ran the great highway that stretched from the cities of eastern Galilee to the coast. The boy saw legions of soldiers, Roman officers in chariots, merchants from Damascus, caravans westward bound with long lines of camels loaded with spices and wheat. The life and action of it all must have attracted Him strongly, and the voices and bugle notes that floated up from below must have seemed to be calling Him to come out and join them. But

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at sunset the boy turned homeward, climbed down again into the sheltered valley where Nazareth lies and sat with His brothers and sisters at the evening meal.

With growing wisdom and deepening insight He began to look beneath the surface of life. Its glitter no longer attracted Him, for He saw the diseases of His times, the heartache of His people, the sins of His generation. Old prophecies lingered in His mind. Within Him developed a sense of God's nearness, of His Father's intentions for Him, of the heaven-appointed mission which He was intended to fulfil. Voices of the needy, prayers of the faithful called Him; His own heart said, "Soon you must answer," but the quiet voice of His Father bade Him wait yet a little.

His strength was to sit still until His training had ended, until His mes-

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sage had taken shape in his mind and His vague desire to help had been crystallised into definite intentions. His hour was near; but it had not yet come, and until it struck He must wait. There would be time enough for action later on; now were the days for growth, for quiet thought, for clearer vision. By and by the multitudes would throng Him, fatigue would wear Him out, solitude would be almost impossible and quiet for thought and prayer could be found only at night on a lonely mountain-side. In the stillness of Nazareth He stores up strength for the coming years.

At last He hears in the preaching of John the call to service. He puts away His tools, leaves His mother and goes forth to undertake His Father's business. Yet before He begins it come the final days of quiet in the wilderness, following His baptism.

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With the voice of His Father ringing in His ears, "This is my beloved Son" he goes to be alone with His own heart, to adjust himself to the future that opens before Him and to fight His way through temptation to a perfect understanding of His Father's will. In the stillness of the desert the preparation of the Son of God ends.

The stillness of preparation is never wasted time. To restrain ourselves from hasty action, to refuse to speak until we are sure of our convictions, is to act and speak with strength and decision when the critical moment arrives. It is in our times of peace that we make most effective preparation for war. On our soul's vacations we store up strength. It is the reserves that we have laid up in the vaults of patience and endurance that enable us to maintain our spiritual solvency. We must not let life so crowd us with its calls for service, even for

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service in the best and highest causes, that we have no moments for spiritual preparation. We must make time to sit still, alone with God, preparing our hearts and minds to serve Him. As George Herbert put it,

“By all means use sometimes to be alone.

Salute thyself: see what thy soul doth wear.”

Spiritual wardrobes need overhauling now and then and well-worn garments stand sometimes sadly in need of repair. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still,” said the Psalmist; and into Jehovah’s mouth he puts the words, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Not by earthquake and storm, but by His still, small voice within our hearts He speaks, preparing His children to understand and execute His purposes. We must be still that we may hear and learn.

The strength of quietness does not

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end when the first stillness of preparation is over. When hearts have been prepared and plans drawn and we have begun to act upon our purposes, when we have committed ourselves to the courses that seem most wise and are facing the risks involved, then comes the need of the stillness of steadfastness. We need then the strength to sit still at our task, to hold on after the novelty has gone, to keep constantly at it although success seem less and less likely, to play the game to the finish no matter what be the odds against us.

It was in such quietness of determined endurance that Jesus, who saw popular sentiment turning more and more against Him and began to foresee clearly the inevitable end of it all, "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Again, when Lazarus lay dead and the little family in Bethany needed Him, He

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would not say "No" to His friends' call, although to answer it meant danger. When His disciples said, "Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again?" He simply arose and went. Before Pilate the chief priests and elders accused Him and the governor questioned Him. He gave no answer, but His silence was more eloquent than speech. In quiet steadfastness of heart lay His strength.

One does not acquire this steadfastness by merely willing that it become his. Behind it there must first be faith. To sit still through preparation, to hold quietly to one's task, to refrain from complaint when laid aside from active service, these all involve faith — faith that the task is worth the time and labour spent in preparing for it; faith that it is worthy of the steadfast devotion of a lifetime; faith that when

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we have done our best and can go no farther, but must sit still, the purposes to which we pledged ourselves are carried on by One much greater than we, to whom we can trust them.

Our Lord always did all that He could and then, when there was nothing more possible, He sat still. Crossing the sea one night in a storm He lay quietly asleep on the cushion in the stern of the boat. He was no sailor. These fishermen, His disciples, were at home on the water; all that was humanly possible they would do, and beyond their human strength was His Father's loving care. He trusted himself to that and, with the perfect confidence of a tired child, slept. His strength was to be still.

Beneath all the steadfastness of Christ lay His quiet faith in His Father. Without it His surrender to His enemies and His silent endurance of their

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cruelty become meaningless. How could He, with His great work just beginning, with His Father's will but imperfectly revealed, with only a handful of followers upon whom He could count and to whom He could intrust His gospel — how could He, without resistance or even protest, have let himself be bound, drawn aside from His unfinished work, made to hang motionless upon the cross and to lie still within the tomb, unless He had had faith in the Father who let these things happen to Him? The God in whom He trusted was one “who worketh for Him that waiteth for Him,” whose purposes ripen fast even while His sons are bound upon crosses or lie still in exhaustion. Faith in His Father made it possible for Jesus in the midst of seeming failure to assert, “I, if I be lifted up . . . will draw all men unto me.”

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“The stars come nightly to the sky,
The tidal wave comes to the sea ;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high
Can keep mine own away from me.”

God would have us acquire this quietness of faith, this strength which can make us content and confident. If we find doors of opportunity refusing to open before us, our field of action more limited than we had hoped, obstacles more baffling and paths more forbidding ; if we seem bound by God's will to sit still at some task which we had hoped was but a preparation for larger things, the only force that can keep us strong in purpose, steadfast in mind and undismayed in heart is faith in the goodness of our Heavenly Father.

Where our work ends, God goes on. While we rest, He neither slumbers nor sleeps, and while we sit still in the place of His appointment, His “lines of

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influence go out through all the earth and there is no speech nor language where His voice is not heard."

Quietness of heart, stillness of soul, is not an occasional source of strength: not something that comes in merely to compensate us for forced retirement or to make us content under the strain of unusual disaster or to hearten us to face extreme peril; but it may be our perpetual possession. It is no hidden treasure to be sought and found only in out of the way places—in the silence of a sick room, in the loneliness of death, in the solitude of a mountain-side; but it is a common flower that grows all along the highway, where whoever will may gather its seeds and sow them in his heart.

Jesus' calmness in the face of danger, His quiet dignity in Pilate's presence, the patience with which He submitted to death, were not exceptional incidents in His career. All His life He faced

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His daily tasks with the same quietness of heart. To trivial duties He gave himself as whole-heartedly as to the cross, for all were parts of His Father's work for Him and His faith kept Him faithful. Through all the story of His life a listening ear can hear the quiet undertone of a heart in harmony with God, of a soul whose strength was perpetually renewed through silent communion with the divine. His steadfastness at the end does not come as a surprise: it has been the settled habit of His life and we feel that it will not fail Him when He needs it most.

There go through life souls who, though weary and heavy laden, have learned His secret; whose strength is the expectant stillness with which they listen for and receive their Father's messages;

“Who carry music in their heart. . . .

Plying their daily task with busier feet

Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.”

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Whence comes the strength that keeps us going? How do we recruit our oft-times flagging courage? Is our strength rooted in quiet confidence in a God who never forsakes those who trust Him? Is stillness of soul, repose of heart, characteristic of us? Are we easily fretted by unexpected opposition, by delays that strain our patience to the breaking point? Do we run to meet temptation or run away from danger when we ought to be showing the strength of our faith by sitting still? Are we more interested in seeing how someone else weaves his fabric or works out his pattern in life than we are in sitting at our own loom weaving steadily in quietness?

Most of all perhaps do we need to acquire this ability to sit still in the presence of our ideals. We all see visions and dream dreams, but how do they affect us? Does the sight of them set us mad with impatience, so that we

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chafe at all delay and run wildly afield against the present order of things? Do we feel like forsaking our necessary duties and setting off like children to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow? Or have we strength to sit still before the vision, like Peter on the house-top at Joppa, until we have mastered its meaning and have appreciated what it requires of us? Can we take our dream of the Kingdom of Heaven and set to work with quiet steadiness to make it come true, perceiving that it can be realised only through faithfulness to common tasks as well as to great opportunities, working with the steadfastness of Christ as truly as with His enthusiasm?

And can we, when we have faced the responsibilities that God puts upon us in home or church or business life; when we have done all that seems immediately possible to have His will

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done in this earth; when we have reached as far as our limitations will let us — can we then sit still? Not in the stillness of despair, but in quiet confidence that He who began His work before we came will finish it, perhaps when we are gone, and that He ever gives His strength to those who seek Him in the quiet of their hearts.

With the Father

With the Father

LUKE 15 : 31. *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine.*

THIS is what the father in Christ's parable says to his elder son. But is it true of him as he stands there? Is he *with* his father? Is he not in reality as far away in purpose and will and disposition as it is possible to be? Measured by latitude and longitude of heart, he is as far from his father as his prodigal brother ever was in the far country. There are barriers that occupy no visible space; and the separations of lives sheltered by a single roof have possibilities of distance that cannot be stated in miles.

And because this son was not really "with" his father, the father's words, "all that is mine is thine," could be

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true of nothing but the acres of the father's farmland and the cattle in his pastures. In the possession of these the son might have a share; but in all the wealth that made up the inner life of his father he had no part. The father's sorrowing love for his absent boy, his hopes for the prodigal's safety, his overwhelming joy at his return, — these he could not give to the elder son, however eager he might be to have this stay-at-home child of his share them.

The life of this home circle was not what the father longed to make it. The relations of his sons to him and to each other were of a sort that grieved his heart. What a mixed family it was! There was the younger son who had come of age and, asking and receiving from his father his share of the inheritance, had gone off in restless discontent into a distant land, where he might have his fling and spend his money and

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himself on whatever his fancy prompted. In his veins ran passionate blood; within his heart stirred primitive instincts which made him impatient of all restraints. He was a child in his desires: headstrong, impetuous, quick to blunder, dreaming that in the freedom of unrestrained indulgence he would find that secret of happiness which he had missed at home. He is kin to all the wanderers who respond to the attraction of the open road, the men with a touch of roving gypsy blood, who feel the charm of the wilder, freer joys, whose philosophy is summed up in the cry:

“How good is man’s life, the mere living! how
fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever
in joy!”

With all his faults his disposition
has possibilities of a generosity and an

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open-hearted kindness that often win for life's prodigals friends who are not mere fair-weather acquaintances. The man who can let himself go with the greatest abandon when flinging himself into evil-doing often becomes transformed into a militant soldier of righteousness when at last he comes to himself. Frankness in wrong-doing may, by a change of purpose, be converted to an equally open and sincere confession of sin.

It is not surprising then to find this foolish boy, when his money is all gone and he is stranded in a strange land, waking up not only to the remembrance of the comfort of his home, but to a realisation of his own folly. His heart begins to burn with shame at the waste of his life, and with no stubborn pride to overcome, he resolves to throw himself in penitence at his father's feet and beg forgiveness.

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There is a simplicity about the prodigal that makes us feel that we can understand him; but what are we to make of the surprising behaviour of the elder son? See him coming back from the field, with his rude plough over his shoulder, tired out with the day's work, hearing, to his wonder, music within the house, inquiring what it means and, in angry mood, refusing to enter when he learns of the way in which his father has welcomed the returning prodigal! Suppose that this was more than a passing mood from which he emerged the next morning ashamed of his surly behaviour; suppose that he was really sincere in his anger, that in his heart he felt that he had just cause for the attitude that he took. How can one explain him? What convictions can have prompted his ungracious actions? How could he ever have brought himself into a state

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of mind where such things were possible for him?

One may charitably say that it was largely a matter of temperament ; and so undoubtedly it was. He is the type of man that represents the other extreme from the prodigal. He is naturally conservative, not fond of change, clinging to things as they have been and are. He is a man of small imagination — no dreamer of dreams like the prodigal, whose fancy could conjure up for him a blissful life of freedom in a far country — no man to be mastered by enthusiasms, or to think the view from the mountaintop worth the toil of the climb up. The elder brother prides himself on taking life as it comes. He calls himself “normal,” “sane,” “cool-headed.” He is never wasteful. If the father had ever offered to kill the fatted calf in his honour he would have said, “No, give it to me and I’ll put it out in my pasture !”

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Do you not think that an elder brother like this had a good deal to do with the younger son's eagerness to leave home? His cold, unimaginative contentedness must have brought him into daily and irritating conflict with the passionate, restless boy. It was a great relief to both of them when the prodigal broke the home ties and went away.

As time passed the elder son grew narrower and more set in his ways; less and less able to put himself into the places of others and sympathise with them; less able to understand the motives that could drive a foolish prodigal to leave his comfortable home and waste his patrimony in reckless extravagance; less able than ever to appreciate the influence of forces and passions whose power he himself had never experienced. As time went by it deepened within him the conviction that any less well-ordered

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way of living than his own was unthinkable for a sensible man.

Yes, his temperament made it easy for him to misunderstand and to be in turn misunderstood; but for his selfishness he alone was responsible. He was thoroughly self-centered. It has been often pointed out that it surely is not by chance that the pronoun of the first person appears five times in quick succession in the few words that he speaks: "These many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine, and thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." His heart comes out so clearly in these unconscious utterances! His speech betrays him. He has been living and toiling all these years for self alone. He cannot think about anything else; and when it comes to judging other people, he has nothing but himself by which to gauge them. The trouble is

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that the heart of a returning prodigal is unmeasurable by his standard.

Taking the elder brother as he stands, with all his narrowness and anger, what hope can we see for him? What stable elements are there in him that may form the foundation of new walls of character? His nature has a certain strength even in its narrowness. The hope for him is in the sense of filial duty that he possesses. He recognises that his father has a claim upon him and, with all his selfishness, he cannot forget that father as his brother has so easily done.

It is a very badly warped sense of duty, to be sure. It involves a service which expresses itself in largely negative virtues. He feels that he justifies himself by saying, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee and I never transgressed a commandment of thine." See what it is that he emphasises and how he omits all mention of love as the

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inspiration of his faithfulness, and any appeal to the affection that his father has for him. He has been beside his father, he has lived near him all these years, and yet he has not been really *with* him.

The elder son will find the key to a new conception of life if he will but begin to realise all that his filial duty demands. The establishment of a genuinely right relationship with his father will mean the infusion of a transforming power into his own life and of a new spirit into his manner of thought. Then he will begin to understand the father's heart, and the father's words, "All that is mine is thine," will begin to come true for him. All the loving sympathy in which the father is so rich, but of which he has known nothing, will begin to soften him. Through intimacy with his father he will begin to realise the heartache

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that the prodigal's absence has caused him. He will sound depths of tenderness of whose existence he has never even dreamed.

With the growth of this new feeling toward his father there cannot help coming a novel sense of the meanness and narrowness of his own life. For the first time he will appreciate his limitations; will see his own selfishness as we who watch him see it, and in his turn he, like the prodigal, will "come to himself."

This coming to himself, through realisation of his father's love and his own meanness, will produce a new openness of heart toward the brother whom he has so long misunderstood. He will grow conscious that there are values in life which have meant nothing to him; that he has been blind to many of the things that count for most. In the close companionship of their

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father's affection, in their united will to do his will, these two will achieve a unity of purpose of the sort that laughs at temperamental differences and refuses to misinterpret that which it cannot understand.

When in the evening the disciples sat alone and talked over the events and utterances of the day, we can imagine them discussing the meaning of their Master's story. Quick-witted Peter or meditative John would soon recognise the characters in the parable as drawn from real life, and would realise the bigness of the problem for which Christ was thus offering a solution. It was easy to identify the characters with the two classes of people with whom Jesus had most to do. Scribes and Pharisees and those who, like them, lived in contented observance of the ritual law—these were the elder brothers who refused

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to unite with prodigals, even though they professed allegiance to the God of whom prodigals stood in need. And the publicans, the outcasts, the open sinners—these were the younger sons, who in careless living had left God out of account and were dwelling apart from Him. But these were they whom the voice of One who spake as no other messenger had ever spoken was awakening, bringing to themselves,—so that they began to recognise in Him one whom their Father, in His grief at their absence, had sent to recall them to their family life at Home as His sons.

Always these two temperaments have been evident in the world's life: the line of cleavage between elder and younger sons has been a marked division. There is always the Tory and the Liberal—one linking its future with the maintenance of long

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established conditions, the other eager to experiment with the new and ready to risk its influence in support of untried measures. And each disposition has its virtues and its faults.

Into our thought of God the same contrasts have come and we have needed both types of mind. One, with a certain resemblance to the elder son in the parable, conceives of life as in the main the observance of set rules, of virtue as in large degree negative; saying, "Lo we have transgressed no commandments of thine!" Content to dwell near the Father, faithfully conserving His worldly interests, labouring in His fields and perhaps obeying His command to feed His sheep, coming to His table with reverence, yet not penetrating to His heart nor dreaming of the love that lies there unappreciated.

But to those who are akin to the younger son life is a wonderful thing,

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filled with possibilities which no code of laws and duties can ever exhaust. They dream of a God who continually declares, "Behold, I make all things new." They find in their Father's frank forgiveness, in His coming forth to meet them, as He came in Jesus Christ, recognition of their value to Him, proof of their likeness. It fills their intercourse with Him with a spirit of joy and gladness which their elder brothers, coming home tired from the field of grim duty, find it hard to understand or appreciate.

Through all the interests of everyday life this same line of cleavage runs. We have always, in our problems of Christian charity, the need of getting successful, prosperous elder brothers to understand and have an interest in and feel responsible for prodigals whose best possessions have been wasted. Between people associated in the same home, or church,

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or office, or any other of the circles in which we meet, lie these deep gulfs of misunderstanding; this temperamental incapacity to put oneself in the place of another; this scornful incredulity as to the power of temptations which the scorner himself has never felt. How many lives go on side by side, yet as separate as though miles lay between them; sometimes as lonely as though lived in solitude! How often we are unwittingly unjust! The self-controlled elder brother doubts the sincerity of the poor prodigal's passionate repentance. And the prodigal, with his quicker perception of his Father's love and his readier understanding of His character, doubts that the elder brother's service is more than mere formal obedience.

We realise these differences and difficulties more and more keenly as we learn to think and talk of universal brotherhood. The great ideal attracts us. It

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kindles our imaginations. It embraces all our hopes and seems to hold within it the solution of all life's difficult problems. It will mean the kingdom of heaven on earth if it can only be made operative. But to put it into operation, to make it real — there lies the trouble! It seems somehow to lack the constraining power that is capable of uniting the warring elements in the human family, of coupling in vital interest elder and younger sons, of harmonising dispositions that are in evident discord, of removing men's prejudices and enabling them to see one another without distortion.

Our failure, for failed we have, we owe to the fact that in taking over and adopting as our own the ideal of Jesus Christ we have not taken with it His basis. He not only preached brotherly kindness, but He gave men a guarantee of unity; a method by which

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the brotherly spirit could be made to grow in their hearts, a bond elastic but strong enough to hold self-controlled elder brothers and frank-hearted prodigals together. He did not begin by telling men to love their neighbours, but "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." He taught that the one would be made possible by and would follow naturally from the other. He grounded His gospel in the childlike relation of individual men to their common Father. He felt that if He could make them realise whose sons they were the question of their other relationships would soon solve itself; knowing that by the endeavour to fulfil their duty to their Heavenly Father they would be drawn near enough together to begin to realise their common interests as brothers.

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Jesus knew that it needs the tie of such a common interest to make men appreciate one another and realise how vastly greater and more important are the things in which they are alike than those in which they differ. It is always so. In the life of a nation when is it that party strife ceases and differences drop out of sight and men work shoulder to shoulder? Is it not always when, because of their country's danger, they have a great cause for which to work and fight? Their common interest swallows up the minor strifes of life. The national standard, with all that it symbolises, becomes a rallying point where all meet as those who love their fatherland.

In the little family of Jesus' friends at Bethany was Martha, who, like the elder brother, was busy about homely tasks and anxious that Christ should reprimand her sister; and Mary, who,

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in the greatness of her love, anointed her Master's feet as He sat at supper. How could the table at which two sisters so unlike as these sat have been a place of happiness for the Saviour unless these women had found in their devotion to their friend, whom they rejoiced to call their Lord, a controlling agreement, an absorbing interest which made all lesser differences of no account?

Again to-day, as once in Bethany, the table is spread for Him and His guests. He invites all who love Him to sit with Him at His Father's table. He speaks to us of our Father's love and care for all His children. He promises that, as we realise that love and enter into the spirit of it, we shall find it giving a new meaning to life, shall find new bonds of friendly understanding and willing service growing out of it.

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And so as we, who hope and work for the union of all the sons of men in one brotherhood, accept our Master's invitation and take the bread and wine that recall His love, let us see clearly, as Jesus saw, the method by which our dreams are to come true and our hopes be realised. Only through the unity of a common experience of God and a growing understanding of our Father's character and purposes shall we know what it is to understand and love one another.

We shall reach this understanding by roads that come from different directions but that pass through the one gate of our Father's heart out into the open country of brotherly love. The elder will come by the hard, stern path of duty; the younger in an agony of repentance, drawn by his sense of need and his experience of the Father's forgiving mercy, until

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each, filled with love for his Father and really with Him, so that all that He has is his, shall delight to be and to work with the other.

God's Estimates

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MATT. 25: 28. *Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents.*

THE parable of this man with the single talent is Jesus' way of telling the story of a man who was afraid to trust God's estimate of him, and who, by his distrust, cut himself off from sharing in his Heavenly Father's work.

What was God's estimate of him? It is shown by the way the master in the parable deals with his servant. Certainly he would never have employed this man if he had not believed him to possess capabilities for service that made him of some value. We can imagine that he had grown up in his master's house. His parents may have been good servants before him, the kind that their

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master could rely upon — people who had been faithful in all the work for which they had been made responsible and had left to this son that best of inheritances, an honest, industrious name. From such a man his master might reasonably expect something.

The employer had among his servants men of varying worth, some whose capabilities he knew to be far in excess of the best that others could do. He rated them according to their capacities, and when it came to the point of assigning them their work, he did not try to strike a dead level of mediocrity, but, wisely, gave to each according to his ability as this had been shown by past experience: to one ten talents, to another five, and to the man with whose fortunes we are now concerned, one talent. You see the master had made a pretty close estimate of this man's ability. He did not attempt to overload him. He gave

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him a single talent, because he felt that it was safe to trust him to take care of just so much, no more.

The meaning of the whole story depends upon what this talent represents. Certainly in Christ's mind it stood for something more than gold. It must be a symbol of something. Evidently also Christ did not mean it to represent ability, such as we so often speak of as "talent," for you will remember that He speaks of the treasure as being apportioned to each man "according to his ability." No, the talent stands for opportunity; the intrusting of it to this man meant the opening of a door before him; it represented a chance to do his share of his master's work.

The talent stands for opportunity to work. Opportunity never comes single handed, but always brings with it its inseparable twin-brother, Responsibility. We often say that we are not responsible

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for more than our opportunities give us the chance to undertake. We do not so often turn the sentence the other way and say that we are personally responsible for every opportunity.

This man's opportunity had been proportioned to his master's knowledge of his ability ; his burden had been most carefully adjusted to his strength. But he did not think so. He felt that his master was mistaken in his estimate of him, that he had rated his ability too high, that he had made him responsible for opportunities that were entirely too big for him to handle. A one-talent opportunity was more than he felt himself capable of living up to. So he deliberately wasted it.

There are a great many different ways of being wasteful. This man's way was not that of the prodigal son, who wasted his possessions in reckless living. He hid his talent. He simply did not use it,

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which is much the same as saying that he misused it. His share of his employer's work remained undone. So far as his master's plans included him, they could not be completed. He shirked his share of responsibility because he was afraid to trust his master's estimate of him.

Apparently he did not think that he was doing anything very wrong. The idea of the seriousness of his responsibility for that one talent does not seem to have occurred to him. He thought only of himself, and not at all of the various people whom he was wronging by his course of inaction.

There, for example, were the men into whose many enterprises this capital should have gone. If he could not use the money himself there were the bankers who would have been glad to pay him for the use of it. Other people's lives were intertwined with the

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opportunities that this man controlled. In short, he was responsible to the community in which he lived for the way in which he used his talent, and the poor, blind man tried to dodge the responsibility by not using the talent at all.

So, too, he was wronging his master. When he went to his employer with the confession of his inefficiency, he held out to him the talent and said, "Lo, thou hast thine own." But did his lord have his own? He had his talent back, but where was the interest that it should have earned him? Where was the profit upon the servant's time? Where was the servant himself? Could his employer as he looked at this man feel that he had what really belonged to him? Had he not lost the income for which he had hoped and to which he had a clear right? Had he not lost his servant? He had come back expecting

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to find this man ready for larger tasks, fitted to accept greater responsibilities and bear heavier burdens, but he discovers him now unprofitable, unreliable, unfit to be put into those higher positions of trust in which he had hoped to use him.

If this man had merely made some financial blunder and in his eagerness to serve his master had made an unsuccessful use of the opportunity afforded him by this one talent, his employer might easily have placed him in some more suitable position. But what could be done with a man who had condemned himself by simply doing nothing? By his faithlessness he had been wronging not only the people who had a right to expect something from him and his master to whom he owed everything, but he had been wronging himself. He did it by forcing other people to take him, not at the valuation that his

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master had put upon him, but at his own cowardly estimate of the possibilities of his life. What could his lord do but transfer to some other man, upon whose faithfulness he could rely, the opportunity that this man had wasted? So he said to his servants, "Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents."

In the next verse Jesus brings out this as the point of the whole parable and states it as one of the controlling principles of the kingdom of God: "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away." Why should such a principle as this hold true in the kingdom of heaven? What motive was it that lay behind the command of the employer in the parable when he ordered this talent transferred from one man to the other? In answering that question

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we discover something of our Heavenly Father's method of dealing with His profitable and His unprofitable sons and daughters.

That the principle taught in the parable does hold true in everyday life has been often noted. One does not need to multiply illustrations to show that faithlessness always means eventual loss, and that to the faithful are given increased opportunities. We see the principle at work, but we not infrequently misjudge the motive that lies behind it.

There are two fairly popular misconceptions of the reason why the employer of the one-talent man said, "Take . . . the talent from him and give it unto him that hath the ten talents." In the first place, people whose idea of the Christian life is such that to them salvation means fundamentally an escape from punishment, to whom

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fear of penalty is the great sanction for right living, will tell you that the talent was taken from this man primarily to punish him. He had wronged his master and now his master uses his authority to deal out to him punishment in retaliation for his faithlessness. His lord has a chance to get even with him, and he takes it by depriving him of the talent that had been his. He pays him back for his wrong-doing.

But to look at the incident in this light is to ignore the simple facts of the story. The master did not need to say, "Take the talent from him," for the poor servant was only too glad to give it up. Indeed he had already let it go, for he had come to his master eagerly holding out the money in his hand and crying, "Lo, thou hast thine own!" The loss of the talent was indeed a punishment, but that punishment was self-inflicted.

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The penalty that the man suffered in the loss of this opportunity that had been his was the work of his own hands; or, rather, it resulted from the failure of his hands to work.

Some mothers know how, from the boy who is always refusing to fulfil the mother's expectations, who shrinks from chances for service and, as he grows older, shirks work, opportunities are gradually taken away. The smaller household tasks have to be done by some one, and so a brother or a sister does his for him. And when a stranger asks 'why Johnny does not do his share,' the mother says with a sigh, "Well, you know we don't expect very much of him." You see the trouble is that Johnny has been unwilling to expect very much of himself, and little by little has cut himself away from the inner companionship of the home circle.

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This man in the parable had been afraid to trust his master's estimate of him; and now his punishment is that the master consents to the servant's estimate of himself and begins to rate him at his own appraisal. The servant had said, "My opportunity is too big for me"; and he gladly let it go. The servant had thought himself incapable of sharing in his master's plans and of furthering his master's work even to the extent of investing one talent, and when he let that talent go he simply cut himself off from the work in which his master had hoped to use him. His own hands severed the bond that united him to his lord, and he really cast himself out into that outer darkness which, in Christ's way of thinking, consists in separation from the divine presence.

For this is always God's punishment for faithlessness: not any added

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penalty given by Him in anger, but just permission to continue the life that one has chosen to lead apart from Him, outside the kingdom where His purposes control.

There is a second misunderstanding of our text that results from a conception of Christianity quite the opposite of that which we have just been considering.

If our motive for Christian service is essentially the hope of reward, that is, if at heart we are righteous because of what we hope to gain here or hereafter, then we shall be very apt to think that the giving of this talent to the man who already has ten is meant to signalise his faithfulness by increasing the reward which he already enjoys.

But is this what we would commonly call a reward? Can we use the word in such a connection? The talent represents opportunity for this man to share

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in his master's work. That, as we have seen, means responsibility, and the addition of one to the ten that the faithful man already controls simply increases his burden. It can never be a reward to him if he has been looking upon his work as a set of tasks which he performs faithfully only in order that he may be rid of it and have time for himself. If such has been his idea of his work, then this added talent with its new responsibility means a delay of happiness for him.

But if he has been finding his happiness by losing himself in his master's work and has learned to trust the wisdom of his master's judgment of him, every new door of opportunity opening before him, every ounce added to the weight of his responsibility, will make his happiness deeper; for he will find in the eleventh talent proof that his master trusts him and is rewarding him for his

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faithfulness by admitting him to a larger share in his work.

Such are God's rewards — not vacations as the goals of faithful service, not a heaven of idleness as the prize for a life of earnest endeavour; but admission through open doors, with growing strength, to broader fields of usefulness. The transfer of the one talent from the unprofitable servant to the man with the ten does involve elements of punishment for the one man and of reward for the other. But neither of these is the real motive for the transfer. The controlling motive of the employer in the parable is his desire to see his work progressing and his purposes advanced.

In those dealings of our Heavenly Father with His children, which are represented by this story, the same motive controls. Men upon whom He has relied may prove faithless, but His work must go on. If some fail Him, then

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upon others, who may be already heavily burdened, an additional responsibility must be put. His Father's heart may ache for those in whom He sees unrealised possibilities for usefulness. He may be grieved over children of His who have not faith enough in His estimate of them to be faithful to the opportunities that He gives them ; but not even a loving Heavenly Father can prevent them from growing by degrees incapable of tasks which once lay well within their powers. Nor can He suffer other children of His permanently to be wronged by the faithlessness of these few. To some other brother or sister the unused opportunity must be intrusted.

In his lines entitled "Opportunity," Edward Sill pictures a battlefield where two armies are fighting :

"A prince's banner
Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by
foes.

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A craven hung along the battle's edge,
And thought, 'Had I a sword of keener steel —
That blue blade that the king's son bears, — but this
Blunt thing !' he snapt and flung it from his hand
And lowering crept away and left the field.
Then came the king's son, wounded, sore bestead,
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,
Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,
And ran and snatched it, and with battle-shout
Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,
And saved a great cause that heroic day."

Victories have often been lost or won
by soldiers with broken swords, by men
with a single talent ; "for unto every
one that hath shall be given, and he shall
have abundance : but from him that
hath not, even that which he hath shall
be taken away."

It matters not whether you or I belong
to the ten, or the five, or the one talent
class ; but it matters everything whether
we believe that God knows where we
belong and are willing to trust His
estimate of us — are willing to try so

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far as we can to live up to what He reasonably expects of us.

But how are we to know what God expects? How can we discover His estimate of us?

In a general way we have many indications of the possibilities that our Father sees in us. There is our age-long conviction that we have been so made as to bear something of His likeness in our hearts; that we are His sons, inheriting some of His traits, so that His character lies dormant in our lives. In this is revealed something of our Father's estimate.

And the witness of His voice within us tells us more. By the reach of our hopes and aspirations we are able dimly to guess at what we may some day become when, in constant companionship with Him, we shall begin to be "perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." Amid all else that the Incarnation

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of our Lord Jesus Christ means to us, does it not mean this: God's revelation of the possibilities of a human heart when brought into perfect accord with the Father's will? It discloses to us the possibility of a life being brought into such absolute harmony with God that He who thus fulfilled God's expectations and lived up to God's estimate could say of himself, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; "I and my Father are one."

But there are times when these great revelations of God's faith in the possibilities of His children grow vague before us; times when we must have more personal guidance; when we seek particular indications of our Father's estimate of our individual lives. We find them in the responsibilities that surround us. Just as the employer in this parable apportioned to his servants the talents according to each man's ability,

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so our Father sends us only such opportunities for serving Him as He knows us to be capable of meeting, only such responsibilities as He knows that we are able to bear.

Each one of us may find out God's estimate of his present working capacity by taking the measure of the opportunities that are open to him. In every opportunity to be kind, patient, and loving in our home circle; to be faithful, diligent, and therefore useful in whatever is our daily work; to be brotherly toward others; to do something to advance God's kingdom even at the cost of self-sacrifice; God is saying to us, "You can do this thing. You may be weak, but my strength is made perfect in weakness. You may be distrustful of yourself, but are you willing to trust me? to believe that I know what is best for you?"

Will we, can we, come like this poor

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man in the parable, saying, " Lord, here is the opportunity that Thou gavest me. It was too great and I was afraid to use it, for I knew that Thou wast mistaken about me " ?

No, rather will we dare to accept our Father's estimate of the possibilities of our lives as we see it revealed to us in the evident opportunities for service that He sends us. We will let ourselves be fitted into our place in His great plan, and so become able to enter into that joy of our Lord which is His gladness as He watches the progress of His work.

The Awakening of Balaam

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NUMBERS 24 : 2. *Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel dwelling according to their tribes ; and the spirit of God came upon him.*

THREE chapters of the book of Numbers (22-24) contain a most interesting story. It is the story of a king who was superstitious, of a poet who was also a prophet, of armies gathered for war in a time of grave national danger: a tale of early days when men knew little about the world in which they lived and the forces which controlled it, when animals were thought capable of speech, and the supernatural was of everyday occurrence. The story, as we have it, seems made up of two accounts, which differ in some of their details ; but, with all its inconsistencies, it gives us the out-

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lines of pictures which our imaginations easily reconstruct, and we find its characters plainly recognisable as men of flesh and blood and human nature.

The warrior king is Balak ; the poet prophet is Balaam ; and the country whose fortunes are at stake is the tableland of Moab, lying to the east of the valley of the Jordan, whose tributary streams divide it by great ravines. The fate of the land is wrapped up with the character of its king. Of the human figures in the story Balaam is the hero ; but that we may have a background for the prophet, look first at the king, Balak, the situation in which he found himself, and his equipment for meeting it : notice Balak's fright, his plan of escape, and his belief about God and men.

Balak's fright was due to the approach from the desert of an army which threatened to sweep his kingdom out

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of existence. He had known other invading Arab tribes, but none that possessed such strength as these Hebrews. Rumours of their approach had been followed by their appearance on his borders, and tales of their military power had been verified by their overwhelming defeat of Balak's neighbours, the Amorites. The invaders seemed bent upon reaching the Jordan, and Balak, whose land lay directly across their path, realised that the gravity of the danger demanded some radical measures. He was afraid; but not too frightened to have a plan.

His plan was suggested by the explanation that he had heard given of the surprising successes which had attended the Hebrews. Popular rumour said that there was more in their victories than met the eye; that organisation had not been their only cause, although it had helped; that the Hebrews' general

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was not entirely responsible for their triumphs. The real explanation was that they had a God, named Jehovah, who had made an alliance with them upon condition that they worship Him with sacrifices. It was His assistance that won them their victories, and His strength was such that it was useless to pin one's faith to the ability of other gods to stand before Him. Now Balak's plan was not to set the gods of Moab against Israel, but to turn the Hebrews' own God against themselves, to break the alliance that bound them to Him and to get Jehovah on his, Balak's, side.

At once he thought how this might be done. Moses and Aaron were not the only priests of Jehovah ; but off by the river Euphrates, beyond the desert, in fertile Mesopotamia, the old homeland of Abraham, dwelt those who shared the Hebrews' faith, and eminent

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among them as seer and prophet lived Balaam the son of Beor, a man of influence with Jehovah. He would surely know the ways by which Jehovah's favour might be alienated from Israel and, if not secured for Moab, at least made neutral in the approaching struggle. So Balak sent messengers unto Balaam to call him, saying, "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me . . . for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." And that he might make sure of Balaam's coming he sent him gifts and promised him great honours. It was an exceedingly clever plan and, from Balak's point of view, entirely practicable.

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One sees at once upon what beliefs it rested and what ideas Balak had about God and men. Of God he thought that sacrifices insured His favour; that His blessing was an arbitrary gift which was entirely independent of any qualities in the one who received it; that it was under the control of those who were God's regularly appointed representatives, and that prophets and priests might dispense it as they chose.

Of men, Balak believed that each has his price; that no one is in business except for what he can make out of it. His estimate of Balaam's worth rises when his first messengers come back and tell him that the prophet has refused to come. He simply sends nobler messengers with richer offers and feels sure of their success. This is his first experience in buying a prophet of Jehovah; but, with so much at stake,

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he feels that it is well worth the outlay. His message to Balaam is, "Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I will promote thee unto very great honour, and whatsoever thou sayest unto me I will do." "That cannot fail to bring him," thinks the king, "and once here, he will not refuse the curse for which I will pay so handsomely!"

But what of Balaam? What sort of a hero will he make, and what is one to think of the hesitating inconsistency with which, after he has once refused to go, he reconsiders his decision, accepts the king's invitation, and then, when the moment for the curse arrives, persistently blesses Israel? Balaam is very human, and, like every human being, full of complexities and contradictions. None are thorough villains, none are perfect saints; but good and evil, weakness and strength, are mingled in all,

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and character is a matter of proportion. Balaam, one day declaring stout-heartedly, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah my God, to do less or more," is the same man who next morning "saddled his ass and went with the princes of Moab," riding straight into temptation. He is a prophet, one who "speaks for" God. But in Balaam's "Jehovah" we can scarcely recognise our "Father in Heaven." He seems to think of God as a big man, subject to varying moods and liable to sudden change of purpose. To-morrow He may allow the thing that to-day He has forbidden. Though God has said clearly, "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people," Balaam does go, and thrice appeals to God to know whether He may not after all have decided to curse Israel.

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Think of what Balaam implies concerning the character of Jehovah by his inquiry as to whether he shall curse or bless! How much tenderness can there be in a God who may will to curse a whole nation merely because it is His pleasure so to do? There is neither mercy nor justice in one for whom such a deed is possible. Yet such was Balaam's God. And there have been men long since his time who have made for themselves a God capable of such a choice!

There are two great characteristics that come to light as one studies this man Balaam. The first is an underlying honesty which makes him unwilling ever openly to disobey God. "Have I now any power at all to speak any thing? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak." This is his steadfast declaration, and seven times he repeats it. He

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will play with temptation, but he will tell no lies in God's name nor prove a false prophet of Jehovah's will.

The second quality is his selfishness. There is no self-forgetfulness in Balaam. He will be true to Jehovah, but he will have one eye looking out for his own comfort. The king's promises are too much for him to resist, and he can see no harm in going over into Moab, on the chance that conscience may yet discover some way of letting him accept the promised reward. Even a prophet must have something to live on, and the king's gold could be most pleasantly invested in a bit of a garden down by the rich banks of the Euphrates, where a retired prophet might spend his old age. It was worth looking into. So his selfish hopes, which render the bribe so alluring, take Balaam straight into temptation. Cruel men are always selfish, and behind the anger with which

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Balaam flogs his beast, and the irritation which the poor animal's unaccountable perverseness causes him, we see a heart so absorbed in its selfish dreams that it has no feeling for the needless pain that is inflicted. What does a little suffering, endured of course by someone else, matter to a man who hopes thereby to gain a fortune? How fortunate for the rider's peace of mind that those who suffer are often dumb, so that none but God can hear their cry!

In Balaam's heart these two characteristics, honesty and ambition, are at war; devotion to God struggles with selfishness. God has only a foothold in Balaam's life, but it is enough to give him a chance of victory. He can do wonders with a man who lets Him get a real grip on his will. With God and selfish ambition each in partial control of his heart, Balaam tries to effect a

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compromise on the basis of religious selfishness. With his first sight of the army of Israel spread out in their tents, he predicts their success, announces God's blessing upon them, and closes with the climax, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" In sight of God's people, Balaam's highest thought is for himself and the end to which he hopes that he may come. The words sound well; they have a pious ring; but it is a selfish piety as Balaam expresses it. It is "me" and "my death" and "my last end" that most concern him. Compare this prayer with the splendid self-forgetfulness of Moses when, in the day of his nation's sin, he stands in the presence of Jehovah and prays, "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin —; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." Think of the gulf of feeling that separates

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Balaam from Paul declaring with magnificent abandon, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, which are Israelites."

Balaam's compromise of God with Self is one that we are often tempted to make. Our prayers, as does this of Balaam, often betray us. Our petitions ring with self-satisfaction; they are most ardent when most personal. We grow interested in the welfare of others, but never to the point of forgetting ourselves. The needs of the brotherhood for whom Christ died never quite drive from us a secret satisfaction with our individual blessedness. We repeat glibly enough Christ's words, "He that findeth his life shall lose it," but we find it desperately hard to duplicate the spirit that lies behind them. In the heart of many who are called disciples of the self-sacrificing Jesus, the strongest

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impulse to prayer is that which moves Balaam as he cries, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

But Balaam's attempted compromise between his religion and his selfishness does not last long. In the end God wins, as He will win in any man who listens and obeys as Balaam did. The prophet remains open-minded to the word of Jehovah, attentive to His messages, that he may learn His will; and his attentive obedience proves his salvation. We can see him growing, as the result of his new experiences of God. He gets a new set of ideas about himself, about God, and about other people.

The change begins as on his westward journey he realises that he is attempting to thwart the will of God. One scarcely knows what to make of the story of his experience with the ass and the angel in the way. Whether it is meant to be a

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record of fact, or a parable that portrays what went on in Balaam's heart, it seems plain that through the perversity of the beast on which he rode there was suddenly brought home to him his own perverseness in turning aside from the path of God's purpose to walk in his selfish way. "I have sinned," he cries, "for I knew not that Thou stoodest in the way against me." He offers to give up the journey and to go home; but God tells him that he must go on. Penitence does not always remove danger, and often the penitent must fight his way through.

Balaam goes on, but with a new caution. Three times, at the request of Balak, he consults the will of Jehovah with regard to the Hebrews. At the third meeting with God it is said that "the spirit of God came upon him," and he took up his parable and in words of beauty and humility began

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his message thus: "Balaam the son of Beor saith, and the man whose eye was closed saith; he saith, who heareth the words of God, who seeth the vision of the Almighty, falling down, and having his eyes open: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!" See how he speaks of himself as "the man whose eye was closed"! He looks back with regret and shame upon his blindness, upon his meagre acquaintance with God. He is no longer proud of himself. As pride goes out, God comes in.

The first thing that Balaam's newly opened eyes see clearly is Jehovah his God. He "seeth the vision of the Almighty," and it is wonderful what new qualities Balaam sees in God, what deep insight he now has into the character of the Almighty. He makes two great discoveries. The first is that God's purposes are unchanging, that there is no variableness in the divine

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will. After his second conference with Jehovah, he says, "Rise up, Balak, and hear. . . . God is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and will He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and will He not make it good?" Having found out this great truth about God, the story says that when he made his third and last attempt to ascertain the will of Jehovah "he went not, as at the other times, to meet with enchantments." Of what use could enchantments be in dealing with a God whose purposes were fixed and whose promises were never left unfulfilled? Balaam has grown aware of the will of God as a great unchanging fact, and he gives up attempting to influence it in Balak's favour.

But mere will may be as arbitrary and unreasoning as one chooses. "Will for what?" we always ask. "God's

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eternal purpose." Yes; but what of the character behind the purpose, that determines its objects? How much has Balaam, or anyone else, really found out about God when he has learned that the Almighty is not a man with an unstable human will, but that the divine resolves are unchanging? He has just as much of a God as the man who hails the fixed laws of nature as ultimate truth; and no more. Until he has got back to the character that lies behind the will, to the motive that controls the purpose, he has no God in the usual sense of that word; certainly not in the Christian sense.

It is the glory of Balaam's insight that he sees, behind the will of God, the motive that determines it. This is his second discovery: that there is a reason why God's heart is fixed upon the children of Israel, that there is a way in which men can win His unfailing favour.

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And that way is not by enchantments, nor by sacrifices (though burnt offerings are pleasing to Jehovah), but God "hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it" because "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob; neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: Jehovah his God is with him." Balaam sees that God's favour is not an arbitrary blessing, but that it rests on grounds of conduct and obedience. It is useless to try to alienate Him from these Hebrews, so long as they keep themselves from sin. It is equally useless to endeavour to win His favour with altars and bullocks, as Balak is trying to do, without any effort at right living. Balaam has discovered the character of Jehovah. He has given the divine will a personality, and that a personality devoted to righteousness.

It is said of Balaam that "the spirit of God came upon him." The Spirit did not stop when it had filled him with

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a sense of his own sinful blindness and with a new idea of God, but it conquered his selfishness. Balaam, for the first time, forgets himself in his anticipations of the future. The climax of his hopes, the heart of his vision, is no longer expressible in the prayer that he may die the death of the righteous and share in his happiness. His whole thought is for the people upon whose black tents he looks out as they lie stretched upon the plain beneath him. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, Thy tabernacles, O Israel!" And the climax of his prophecy and the heart of his prayer is now, "Blessed be everyone that blesseth thee."

Forgetting entirely the dangerous situation in which he stands (now that he has blessed the people whom Balak would have had him curse), Balaam glories in the Hebrews' future. It needed no gift of miraculous power to foresee the

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outcome of the struggle between Moab and the invaders. Moab had but a little time before suffered at the hands of their neighbours, the Amorites. Israel was a warlike host whose time of desert journeying had given them formidable qualities. Their recent successes against Og, the king of Bashan, had proved their strength. As Balak expressed it, they had licked up his neighbours "as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." Of the two leaders Balak was not to be compared with Moses, and Balaam realised the tremendous advantage that Israel possessed by reason of their cleaner morals and their better understanding of God. For such a people Jehovah's favour was sure to go out and their future was certain to be glorious.

The effect of the spirit of God upon Balaam was to turn him from a selfish individual, interested chiefly in his own private welfare, into a public-spirited

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man who forgot himself in his interest in the fortunes of the nation whom God had blessed. Does not the spirit of God always affect a man in that way? Think of the men upon whom it is said to have come with power! When the Spirit fell upon Moses it sent him from tending sheep in the desert to free his people from bondage. The angel of Jehovah found Gideon as he "was beating out wheat in the wine-press" near his father's house, and said, "Go, lead thy people to victory against the Midianites who oppress them!" It is said that the spirit of God moved upon Samson and that he began to devote his strength to the public good by ravaging the frontiers of Israel's inveterate enemies the Philistines. Saul was out on a private errand, looking for his father's asses which had strayed from home, when the prophet Samuel met him and said, "The spirit of Jehovah will come

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mightily upon thee, and thou . . . shalt be turned into another man." And the other kind of man into which he was turned was a public-spirited individual who rallied his nation when the Canaanites rose against them and became their leader in danger.

When the Spirit came to Elijah or Amos or Isaiah, it at once lifted them out of the circle of their own personal interests and gave them a sense of responsibility for the people among whom they lived. It is recorded of Stephen that he was "full of the Holy Spirit," and that he became so active in his efforts to advance the cause of his Master that his spirituality literally cost him his life. In that early circle of believers, whenever you find a man who was "full of the spirit of God," you find one who was devoting his life, not to the quiet cultivation of solitary communion with God, but to the service of

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his brothers and to unceasing efforts to establish the kingdom of heaven upon earth. When the Spirit became incarnate in a human form it testified its presence by a life of self-sacrifice, a gospel of good-will, and a death upon a cross.

When we say of anyone, "Yes, he is a good man, kind and thoughtful, interested in the public welfare, an intelligent citizen, always leading in every movement that aims to promote justice and righteousness and the happiness of his fellowmen, a good 'practical' Christian, but he is not very spiritually minded," are we sure that we know what spirituality is, and that our definition of a spiritual man would agree with God's? If God be love, then the spirit of God must be a spirit of service. When we find anyone claiming to have received that spirit, but giving no evidence of a self-forgetting interest in the needs of

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his fellowmen, contenting himself with private communion with God and with prayers for his own future blessedness, we may well question whether he has ever really known the spirit of Jesus' "Father" or of Balaam's "Jehovah."

As Balaam foresees the coming triumph of the Hebrews, he prophesies, "Now shall it be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!" We may say of Balaam himself, as we see the victory that he has won over his selfishness and the triumph in which he emerges from his temptation, "What hath God wrought in this man's heart!" With what courage has he filled Balaam! With what new understanding of the character of Jehovah! With what noble joy in the welfare of others!

And how blind Balak is to all that has taken place. Balaam has found the kingdom of heaven, before the very eyes of the King of Moab; but all that

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the king can say is, "Flee thou to thy place! I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, Jehovah hath kept thee back from honour!" Yes! he has had no promotion, except that he has met Jehovah! No honour except that the spirit of God has come upon him! What does Balaam care now for the king's silver and gold, when he has found the pearl of great price? He turns away empty-handed but full-hearted.

Back across the desert travels a man who speaks kindly now to the ass that carries him, who is glad to return to the little town of Pethor down by the Euphrates, whence Balak's messengers had summoned him. The thought of Pethor had lingered in his mind while an exile, and in his prophecy he had likened to it the goodly tents of Israel. "As valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river-side, as lign-aloes

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which Jehovah hath planted, as cedar trees beside the waters."

Soon the desert lies behind him and the river is in sight; down he goes into the fragrant valley. News of the prophet's return spreads. Friends come out to meet him, and as they see how his face shines and what new happiness there is in his look, they say, "Surely he must have received great honour and many gifts." They cry, "Balaam! What did the king give you? Where are the rewards?" And Balaam answers, "The rewards are here! I, the man whose eye was closed, have seen the vision of the Almighty. I have heard the words of Jehovah. I have received the spirit of God."

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JOHN 15: 14. *Ye are my friends, if—*

THERE are not many new words in Christ's vocabulary. We never need a glossary to explain His talks with the people who came to Him. He found the common speech of His time sufficient for the demands of His thought, and He spoke with a simple directness which left no one in doubt as to the impression which He intended to convey.

The Master came as the revealer of a God who has declared, "Behold, I make all things new," yet He found old, familiar things most effective in His work. The fundamental principle of His teaching was so radical as to make many who had been first last and the

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last first and to necessitate a reconstruction of life; yet He set quietly about His great task and spoke to men, not in thunder and storm, but in words that were simple and easy to grasp.

The symbols that He used represented known quantities; the things that lay nearest to hand were His materials; He took from people's daily life the elements that have become peculiarly identified with His work. The simple meal of the peasant, bread and wine, He made His memorial, intending to teach them that they could no more live without Him than without their daily food, that in Him they were to find their strength. For the insignia of His followers He took, not a crown, nor a jewel, nor any mystic sign, but the cross on which common thieves were put to death, and assured them that only by taking it bravely upon their shoulders could they become His disciples.

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He interpreted to people their own daily lives. Men sowing in the field, women at work about the house, children at play, the busy streets of the cities—all these He clothed in the beauty of His parables, and by familiar things which men could see all around them made clear the character and reality of things, as yet, unseen.

Compare the words that He used most frequently with the words that appear in our descriptions of the things of God. Our human tendency is to feel that things which are sacred must be made a bit remote, that the most precious things must not be too plainly spoken of, that common speech is inadequate to express uncommon truth. We have taken refuge in a lot of technical words which constitute our theological vocabulary, feeling that by the multiplication of syllables we somehow or other give added dignity

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to the thought which the word contains.

The plain upper room in Jerusalem and the unroofed places of worship of our ancestors out under arching trees have given way to church buildings that represent the finest achievements of architectural skill. Just so, for the simple speech of the Master and His fishermen friends have been substituted sets of long words and technical phrases such as He would scarcely recognise.

When our hearts are really hungry for food; when we feel that unless we get a fresh grip upon the realities of life we must lose our battle; when we want comfort and guidance, and want them sorely and at once; with what relief we turn back to those words, simple and easy to be understood, in which our Lord expressed His truth! His was the universal language of the heart. His speech was that of our common manhood.

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Nowhere does one see this more clearly than in the record of His last days. The end was near and in the closeness of their last hours together He spoke out all His heart to His disciples. He bade them be true to Him when He was gone and gave them an intimate name by which they might think of their relation to Him. It was no new title, no strange, secret word. He said simply, "I have called you friends."

It is an old, old word, this word "friend." The disciples had other friends outside their circle, friends back in the Galilean villages from which they had come, whom they wondered if they would ever see again. This was no novel, strange relationship which their Lord was establishing with them. But old, familiar words and things may suddenly be given unique values by being connected with a new object.

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Laid away carefully at home have you not some book, or bit of clothing, or a letter, ordinary enough to others' eyes, but to yours rendered most precious through its association with someone whom you have held dear?

This word "friend," this phrase "my friends," might mean much or little on the lips of someone else; but on the Master's lips it meant everything. "You men, Peter and James and the rest of you, have obeyed me, trusted me,—so far as was possible for you, understood me. You have called me Master and you have served me all this time that we have been together. But now 'no longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what His Lord doeth: but I have called you friends.' And to be really my friends is to be friends also with One who is much greater than I. 'I am not alone'; but with me in constant

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companionship is my Father whose will I do. 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,' for 'I and the Father are one.' Admission to my love means acquaintance with Him. Companionship with me, the carpenter of Nazareth, means friendship with the infinite God."

Those men and women who were afterwards first called "Christians" at Antioch might equally well have been known by this title, "the Friends of God." It is a title that has never been outworn, but that still holds good for all who care to claim it. In the circle of our intimate friends we may, if we will, include the Lord of earth and heaven, who came once to men in humble form and called them His friends.

The old relation of king and subjects separated by a great distance never satisfies us in our thought of God. Mere subjects know not what their Lord

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does; but to us He has revealed much of His plans in His Word. Our desire for Him is so deep in the fibre of our hearts, our lives seem so incomplete without Him, we find within us ideals so like His, that we grow convinced that we possess some dim outlines of His likeness. No name for Him seems to satisfy us until we have called Him "Father," and then we rejoice to find ourselves indeed His sons and daughters.

Once having found Him, we remain always His children, if we trust Him. All through life it is from our Father that all blessings come. He teaches us and trains us, is very patient with our ways, supplies all that we need, and when we are in loneliness and want we look up to Him and say, "Our Father." Yes, all through life we call ourselves His children, yet within the bounds of the family circle there are possibilities

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of ever-increasing intimacy. The Father on whom we rely may grow even more near and dear as we learn to call Him also our Friend.

We have all seen the boy who, at first, took everything that his father gave him as a matter of course, awaking gradually to an appreciation of what has been done for him. He becomes proud of bearing his father's name, responsive to his affection, glad to be known as his son. The father feels repaid for all his care. Then comes the time when the boy grows to manhood. He reflects about his father's love, begins to understand what it may have cost his parent to be patient with him when he was wayward and to care for him when he was childish. He becomes aware of the larger interests with which his father is concerned. He grows interested in his father's business, begins to understand

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his plans and is admitted more and more into his confidence. Between father and son develops a new bond, the tie of a common interest. The boy begins to appreciate his father's responsibilities and burdens and to share them. The unreasoning child has grown to be his father's friend, and willingly enlists his developing powers in the service of the family enterprises.

It is of such a relationship as this that our Lord gives us a glimpse when He calls us to friendship, through himself, with His and our Father. Retaining all childlike teachableness and humility and perfect trust, we are to be growing sons and daughters. We are to receive clearer understanding of His purposes and plans; to be admitted to know what our Lord does in this His world; to become strong enough to be sent on His errands and dependable enough to be trusted away from home;

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to invest our lives in His great business and, through the comradeship of service, grow to be friends with our Father.

To men who were such friends, our Lord Jesus gave the bread and wine and bade them remember Him. And with the name He coupled His test for friendship: "Ye are my friends, if—" If what? If ye recognise in me the Son of God? If ye call me the ideal of manhood? If ye feel toward me love and reverence? If ye find in me salvation from the power of sin? Yes, all these, but much more, too. "Friends of mine if—ye understand my purposes and make them yours; if ye look beyond me to the kingdom for which I pray; if ye commit yourselves unreservedly to the work for which I live and die. Ye are my friends if ye do these things which I command you."

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Who can face that test without sorrow? Who of us can remember Jesus Christ without at the same time bringing up the memory of things that we would only too gladly forget? He has counted on us, and we have failed Him. He has needed friends, and we have practically said that we did not know Him. Often we have not even been His servants, but have let ourselves be mastered by passions with which He is at war. We have let impulses that are His enemies have their way with us. We have not cared most for the things for which He cares, nor been true friends of the causes which He befriends. We have not claimed kinship with those of His brothers and sisters who are less favoured members of His great circle and who stand in need of love.

With sorrow, but not in despair, we confess that we have not been dependable

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friends of Christ. And just because His friendliness is unchanging, He answers our frank acknowledgment with forgiveness. He has never been deaf to a friend who needed Him, and to-night He looks with love into every heart and is glad to own us as His.

If our friendship has faded, He restores it. If we have never been His friends in this intimate fashion, He wants us now. He says, "Come, let us be friends, you and I. We need each other. Put your life in line with my purposes, make my Father's will yours, accept my point of view, measure values by my standards, dedicate your life to the service of my brothers. Do this and you shall find that I am your comrade. These are the tokens of my friendship."

"Nor name, nor form, nor ritual word,
But simply following Thee."

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There is much that must be inarticulate in such a friendship. Do you know any words that can tell another what a true friend is to you? Can you measure what it means to have someone at hand with whom you can take things for granted, who never misjudges, never fails of response to your mood, who is devoted to the things for which you care? How much more friendship with Christ means, who can express? But surely it means this: that as we set ourselves about the tasks of life and face each day's problems, there is in our hearts the assurance that somewhere, though we cannot see Him, He watches us. He knows our temptations. He rejoices in our victories. When He sees us hard beset and almost beaten He whispers, "My friend, be strong! I am near you and my strength is yours." Loneliness of heart becomes impossible, life with its struggles becomes "just a

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stuff to try the soul's strength on." Our prayers are not mere unreasoning adoration, nor self-centered petitioning, but they are conversations with that Friend who stands at the heart of the universe, about His work. His answers come through some clearer understanding of His truth and an increasing joy in His service.

Upon such a platform of friendship we as fellow-workers in this church must stand. For pastor and people to be, not in any merely formal sense, but in reality, friends; for all who belong to this big family to feel themselves bound together in one "bundle of life" by bands that are a great deal stronger than any ties of mere ecclesiastical organisation,—this is the ideal for us who bear His name. Friends because, beneath all outward differences, we are at heart devoted to the same life objects. As friends, kind to one another, tolerant

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of spirit, charitable in judgment as well as in purse, reverencing each other's hopes and ever ready to find joy in any sacrifice that will further the work of our one great Friend. Knit to Him in such friendship we shall have a bond that is elastic but strong, that can stand strains without breaking and pull heavy loads without giving way.

Looking out beyond ourselves, we are to keep this church in its larger relations the friend of all. Our circle is no closed company of like-minded people bound together by some secret rite. The only thing about it that is fixed is its centre, Jesus Christ. We must see to it that its circumference is constantly widening to include all who, like us, are His friends. We must befriend all movements that have His interests at heart. For only as we do what He commands us are we truly His friends, prepared to sit at His table and remember His dying love.

The Restful Yoke

The Restful Yoke

MATT. 11: 29. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

IF we go into a factory or a store or an office building and inquire for the rules that govern the employees, we are not likely to find much said about "rest." Among the mottoes sometimes fastened upon the wall above a desk there may be injunctions to "Keep busy" or "Do it now!" but one would look in vain for an invitation to rest. In the strenuous arena of present-day life "rest" is a popular synonym for "laziness." When pressure was brought to bear this winter upon our large department stores to provide seats for the girls and women employed behind their counters, many employers fought the

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suggestion most vigorously and have assented to it only when compelled by law to do so. Rest for workers was not in their programme.

There are plenty of people who would admit the exquisite beauty of Christ's invitation as given in our text, who would be inclined to deny it any practical value in the world of affairs. A summons to rest is well enough for some people: for the very old, whose active life is ended, whose work is finished, and whose victories are won. They have earned their rest and we rejoice in their enjoyment of it. Rest is for the sick who are forced to step aside and lie still, or for the dying who, quitting at last the endless struggle here, go through the door into the rest and happiness of a larger life. If they have been faithful in work, brave in battle, useful in service, they shall find rest unto their souls.

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Rest hereafter and forever for those who want it; but who can rest now? Men point us to the world's needs and ask us what we are going to do about them. They show us the sin that is all around us and that persistently propagates itself. They show us our asylums and jails filled with those who have been too weak to resist temptations from which they should have been sheltered. They confront us with evils that flourish now as luxuriantly as in the days before the Master came to sow the earth with the good seed of the kingdom of heaven. We are being made more conscious than ever before of how much needless suffering there is in the world, how many people are crushed under loads that should never have been put upon them, how many children have no fair chance to grow up into the manhood and womanhood that God meant to be theirs. Men whose souls are on fire with the

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wrongs of life tell us that for their continuance we are responsible ; that our ignorance has had much to do with them ; that our indifference has had more. As we see the injustice that must be endured by many, and guess at the bitterness of heart that lies hidden within those who know themselves to be ill-treated yet realise their helplessness to escape, though we may still thank God that He has

“ Made this earth so bright,
So full of splendour and of joy, beauty and light ;
So many glorious things are here, noble and right,”

we must often find our thanksgiving drowned in a prayer that in His mercy He will forgive us for the sinister shadows that mark life's surface, and for the ignoble things that we still allow to deface earth's beauty.

How can we talk of rest when our brothers, the world over, are in need of help ? How can we be quiet when they

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are calling us with voices that command all that is best in us? To do so one must be deaf and blind, with a heart of stone. Not rest, but work, action, service, sacrifice are the words that have power to interest and move us.

“ . . . life is, — to wake, not sleep,
Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level . . .
To the heaven's height, far and steep.”

The reason why not more of those who are alive to the needs of their fellowmen are to be found numbered among our church members, the reason why so many of our social reformers — men and women who are giving their lives for the kingdom of righteousness and love in which they believe — look for little direct assistance from the organised church of Christ, is because she has so often been merely a resting-place.

If you have been thinking of the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ and, with your

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heart full of love for others who need you, have been dedicating yourself to follow His example; if you are aflame with a passion for service, how do you feel when you are asked to sing

“O Paradise, O Paradise,
Who doth not crave for rest?
Who would not seek the happy land
Where they that loved are blest ?

O Paradise, O Paradise,
I greatly long to see
The special place my dearest Lord
Is destining for me” ?

Have we not too many hymns that breathe a spirit of surrender and a selfish longing for ease, and too few that strike the note of self-forgetfulness and ring with a clarion call to service?

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Does it bring up before your mind a picture of quietness; of green pastures and still waters; of idle hands and hours that slip by unmeasured by

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accomplishment? Have you ever tried such idleness, and did you then wish that it might be made eternal? When the novelty of it had worn off did it prove restful or wearisome? And was it with reluctance or with gladness that you plunged back into the rush and strain of a world whose demands are incessant, and whose burdens tax your strength to bear? Ask the man who nevers works, the chronic loafer, who is always resting, and you will find him constitutionally tired out, more languid and unhappy and out of sorts with life than the most hard-working labourer who carries a hod or swings a pick. Ask the unfortunates for whom the labour of someone else has made a life of idle enjoyment possible, and who have never tried the experiment of making other people happy, whether freedom from responsibility means rest; and their lives will tell you, if their lips do

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not, that idleness means restless discontent, that life is a bore and rest is impossible until they have invented for themselves artificial requirements that take up their time. A list of the most discontented, the most unhappy, the most restless in any community would be exactly a list of the most inactive, the most useless, the most selfish among rich and poor.

The Man of Nazareth summons us not to lazy inactivity, but to rest. The rest that we are to find by coming to Him is like that of God himself. Our Father in heaven is incessantly busy. In all our afflictions He is afflicted, by our sins His heart is grieved, for our lives He plans. Our Lord assures us "My Father worketh hitherto." Yet the Psalmist speaks of God's "rest," saying of those who have been untrue to Him, "They shall not enter into my rest!"

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This rest, which Jesus offers us, as part of our heritage as children of God, He associates with a yoke, a burden, and a lesson, and promises it to us, not through setting us free from these, but through our acceptance of them. They suggest three ways in which those who are heavy laden may find rest in Him.

The first is the rest of decision. "Take my yoke upon you." A yoke steadies one who wears it. It is for the purpose of tying him to something definite. Unyoked oxen may roam in the meadows at will, but when the yoke is placed upon their necks, they find their progress restricted to the particular road or furrow that stretches immediately before them.

We have all known at times the torturing restlessness of indecision, that miserable state in which we are unable to "make up our minds." Our unmade minds fret us and carry us first in one

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direction and then in another. Life shows us many paths that are possible, and some that attract us so strongly that we find it hard to decide upon one of them. Too much depends upon our choice for us to choose hastily; yet until we have chosen we are restlessly unhappy. Christ says, "Take my yoke upon you and I will show you the path. Let me end your uncertainty. Cut the knot of your difficulty by deciding for me and boldly commit yourself to my guidance. Take my yoke upon you and you shall find rest unto your soul." Held by that yoke our minds become stayed upon Him, we are committed to His keeping, and we grow able resolutely to exclude the attractions of other paths that once allured us. Steadfastness, patience, resolution, quiet perseverance, certainty of purpose — these are some of the elements of that rest which comes to the souls of those who bear His yoke.

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Then, too, our Lord offers us the rest of employment. There are few things sadder than to see men able and willing for work and in need of it but unable to find it. Outside the newspaper offices, where are posted the lists of situations advertised in the morning paper, you will find every day a group of men who are seeking employment. The faces of the more needy among them haunt your memory, if you have seen them scanning the list. They have nothing to do ; but they cannot rest until they find work. Tense faces would relax and troubled hearts be quiet with the offer of immediate employment.

Christ had seen the unemployed in the cities of His day ; had watched the faces of the labourers waiting in the market place until the eleventh hour, hoping against hope that someone would hire them. He had known what steady work meant. He had been trained in

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the painstaking exactness of a carpenter shop and had learned the satisfaction of making things, the pleasures of fatigue, the restfulness of being bound to a definite daily task.

It matters a great deal what the task is to which we are shut in and whose orders we are taking. Not all employment guarantees happiness and rest of heart. There are men and women in tailor shops on the east side of New York, there are workmen in some factories and in many mines, whose condition is a bare existence. They are driven to the limit of endurance. There is for them no pleasure in work. It would be mockery to ask them whether they enjoyed it. They work on and on because their helplessness offers them no alternative save starvation. But if one should go to them and offer them employment where wages were adequate and hours of service fair and

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the employer kindly interested in all who work with him, the new surroundings would bring with them a rest such as their souls had never before known.

There are some of us whose souls are unemployed. The best part of us is lying idle and unexercised, and it frets us. We are fair game for all sorts of doubts and fears and temptations that would have no hold upon us if we were kept busy. We are full of capabilities for which we have found no outlet. Our bottled-up energies keep us in perpetual unrest. We expend in criticism of other's efforts, in morbid self-examination, in a dozen fantastic ways, the strength that should be put beneath burdens that are worthy of sons and daughters of the living God. We are not growing in character, in strength and patience and sweetness of disposition, because we are not being exercised in the only work that is capable of calling

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forth the very best that is in our hearts. We need to be mastered by a purpose which will give employment to our better selves ; we need a burden heavy enough to call into play all the strength that our Father is willing to put at our disposal. If we have found the rest of decision by accepting Christ as our way of life, we have found that to take His yoke upon us is to be linked to a burden which is also His. Coming to Him means putting our shoulders beneath the load He bore. Feeling its weight calls forth all our reserves of endurance and leaves that deep rest of soul which comes through useful service.

Some of us are restless not because our hearts are unemployed, but because we are entangled in the service of an unworthy master. Sin has us in a grip that we cannot break, and we are slaving along in a routine of wrongdoing from which escape seems

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impossible. We are the unhappy wicked whom Isaiah describes as being "like the troubled sea, for it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Fear may have conquered us; and fear is a thankless master. We are too afraid of failure to accept responsibility, too worried and anxious about to-morrow to enjoy the pleasures of to-day or to be thankful for the blessings of yesterday. We are care ridden, expectant of misfortune; we let our work drive us instead of reversing the tables and driving it.

Of all hard masters the hardest is Self. No stranger has such power to torture us as we have to make life miserable for ourselves. To be bound into the narrow interests that are peculiarly our own, to be forced to measure the value of the visions that spread before us in terms of their immediate

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usefulness to us, to find selfishness the common denominator of all the fractions that make up our life's total, is soon to get ourselves into the mood where we cry out with Paul, "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" or sing in the words of one of our hymns:

"O Lord, how happy should we be
If we could cast our care on Thee,
If we from self could rest."

The secret of resting from self is not simply to cast our burden on the Lord, but to put in its place His burden. What we need is not a vacation from service, but a change of employment. It is to just such people as we, who are tired of serving sin, of being at the mercy of our fears, of living for ourselves alone, who are weary and heavy laden, that Christ says, "Come unto me! Let me readjust your load. Come and share with me the burdens

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that my love puts upon me. You are not happy. Life is going by and you are missing the best of it. You may deceive others, but I see your troubled, restless heart. Come, let me use you for my Father's purposes, and you shall find rest unto your souls!" Until we let ourselves be employed by Him, in work for the bodies and souls of men which will call forth every capacity for tenderness and long-suffering and brave persistence that is hidden away in these strange natures of ours, we may dream of peace and rest, but we shall never find them.

Jesus Christ has more than a burden and a yoke to offer those who love Him. "Come," he says, "and learn of me. Be my comrade and find the rest of friendship."

We all know people to whom we instinctively turn when we are tired, because they rest us so. To be with

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them means to recover our poise, to renew our enthusiasm and to go back to work with a heart that has been steadied and quieted. How often the vision that we have lost is recovered by association with someone more clear sighted than we! Our friends are often our interpreters, explaining life to us, explaining us to ourselves. We never grasp the full possibilities of our lives until we have sunk them in our love for someone else.

“ Only — but this is rare —
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
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A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
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And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth forever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest;
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.
And then he thinks he knows
The Hills where his life rose,
And the Sea where it goes. . . .”

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Our Lord calls us to come to His table and with the bread and wine take Him into our hearts. If we have never committed ourselves to Him, He invites us to-day to find rest for our souls through a steadfast decision for God. He offers us a part in His work of establishing His Father's kingdom amongst men. If we love Him we will go forth to-morrow into a world where we shall have tribulation, as He had a cross. We shall find tasks awaiting us that will mean for our bodies toil and struggle. We must set our minds to problems full of uncertainty and perplexity and disappointment. We are promised no immunity from the temptations and toils of our human brotherhood.

"Life's school will be hard," says our Master, "its lessons long and its tests stern; but if you are learning of me you cannot fail or grow discour-

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aged. I will teach you my secret of strength and patience, and in my friendship you shall find rest unto your soul."

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MATT. 7:14. *Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.*

IF this sentence came to us from some anonymous source and we were asked to guess the author, we should probably never think of attributing it to Jesus Christ. It does not sound like Him. It is much more the sort of saying that we should expect from an orthodox Jewish scribe who hoped to be saved by walking in the narrow way marked out by the Law. It might have fallen from the lips of some mediæval theologian for whom the path into the kingdom of God was sharply defined by walls of doctrine. Some of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, breaking with forms of worship and methods of church government which they believed

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to be wrong, and, for conscience' sake, willingly subdividing themselves into tiny sects, believed most firmly in the narrowness of the way that leadeth unto life.

We admire them for having had the courage of their convictions, but, as we see the scores of rival denominations into which our Protestantism has been divided, we cannot help wishing that their convictions had been broader, and that, in their zeal for the less important things, they had not forgotten the common purpose which should have been strong enough to unite them to many from whom by opinion and tastes they were separated.

We have gotten into the way of shrinking from narrowness, because of what it stands for. Intellectually it means ignorance and unwillingness to learn. To be "narrow" morally, means to be suspicious, or conceited, or

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controlled by prejudices. To be religiously "narrow" suggests to us intolerance, a dogmatic disposition which leaves no room for differences of opinion and unduly magnifies the minor points of worship and conduct.

We want our Christianity to be the opposite of all this, to be marked, not by narrowness, but by breadth. Thinking of it as the Law of God for His children's lives, we delight to say with the Psalmist, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." Identifying it with the love that our Father has for us, we use Faber's lines :

"There 's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea ;

.
For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,

.
But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own,
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own."

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We long for more of this wideness of the love of God in our own lives. When we feel ourselves cramped and stunted by limits that are artificial and unnecessary ; when our growth seems checked by a lack of sunshine and air and we find that we are becoming unsympathetic, meanly critical of others, easily irritated by small annoyances, we are ashamed of our intolerance. The alacrity with which we misunderstand people's intentions, misjudge their motives and are unjust to their better purposes makes us heartily sick and tired of our lack of breadth. We cannot help longing for more of the sweetness of old John Eliot, who could say as his life drew to a close, " My understanding leaves me, my memory fails me, . . . but I thank God my charity holds out still." .

We all want more real charity in our own hearts, and when we associate

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ourselves together as members of the Church of Jesus Christ we try to give to our organisation this same broadly tolerant spirit. Our church doors are thrown wide open and we welcome to worship and work with us all who love Jesus Christ in sincerity and are eager to help in the establishment of the kingdom of love and righteousness upon earth. We refuse to let His church be made narrow by class distinctions, limited in its ministry to satisfying the needs of people of a single social standing, be they rich or poor. In it all shall meet as children of a common Father, possessing equal privileges, sharing the same responsibilities and breathing an atmosphere of tolerant Christian brotherliness.

If our doors are thrown wide to receive all who would find God here, the windows must be open to let in fresh air from the four corners of God's

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heaven. There must be the freshness and sunshine of a faith that gladly welcomes truth from whatever quarter it comes; that is afraid of nothing new that is true, nor loyal to anything old that is false.

We rejoice in all this making of narrow places broad and this wider welcome which we have grown able to extend. We rejoice in it not as a new thing, but as something very old—as old as the days when our Master walked on earth, calling to Him any who loved His Father and foretelling the time when the attraction of His dying love should grow so strong that it should draw not a few, but all men, to himself. To be drawn to Him means that we are lifted up to share His wide horizon. There is nothing small or narrow about His spirit. There is no room in it for pettiness or prejudice. If we have been slaves, it sets us free; our limits prove

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elastic ; we grow to be broader men and women who may some day bear a faint resemblance to "the stature of the fulness of Christ."

If a spirit that is tolerant of other people's opinions, that gladly overlooks the differences that are not essential, that throws its doors wide open, is the spirit that must characterise a true Church of Jesus Christ—what can our Master have meant by declaring that the way that leadeth unto life is narrow? Is not this a sentence perhaps misquoted by Matthew, or some chance word inconsistent with our Lord's more careful utterances? We can dismiss it with a question mark ; or we may turn it over in our minds until we come to the conclusion that this is one of the sentences that leave us in no doubt as to Jesus' ability to read men's hearts and His understanding of life. If ever He stated a fundamental fact of human nature and

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a sane conclusion about men's relation to God, it was when He spoke of the narrowness of the way that leadeth unto life.

Our churches are, after all, but helps upon the road, signposts that point the path; the way itself lies beneath the surface of our organisations. It is that private path in which we walk, stripped of all pretence, watched only by our Father in heaven. If our way be one that leads unto life, then its successive steps run in the direction in which our Master went, and it brings us daily nearer to the goal for which He aimed. Our Lord means to say that this path, with the hardships of which His own experiences had made Him familiar, and along which He calls us to follow Him, is a narrow way.

There is a certain narrowness which is inseparable from life, and the higher and more perfect the life for which one

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aims, the narrower is the path that leads to it.

It is true physically. With all our boasted knowledge of this world in which we live, we are animals for whom life is possible only within very narrow limits. A few degrees too much of heat, a touch of extreme cold, and we are like the grass of the field that withereth. We are shut in to the necessity of having a certain amount of sleep and food and shelter. We can discover Nature's laws, but we dare not defy them, and we succeed in prolonging our existence only by walking circumspectly in the midst of a thousand forces of decay and destruction that hem us in and make war against us.

If we want not merely to exist, but to live long and happily, we find that the path grows even narrower. The way of health is yet more limited by dangers that must be avoided and rules that

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must be obeyed. To keep well we forego indulgence in a great many things that promise us pleasure, for the path that leads to healthful physical life is so narrow that one has to be constantly on the alert to avoid stepping out of it.

Then think of how we are shut in intellectually. All our thinking is done according to rules of logic that make a certain conclusion inevitable from a certain set of premises: that two and two will always and everywhere, under every conceivable circumstance, make four; that there can be no effect without an adequate cause—these and a dozen other principles we have to recognise as marking out the paths in which our minds must run and our reasoning be done. Scarcely do we become accustomed to these limits which affect everyone before we begin to discover that there are individual limits that apply especially to us. As children

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we think that we have only to choose our way from a score of paths that seem open to us; but one door after another closes against us, until we find ourselves shut in to a single path made narrow by our limited strength, or patience, or wisdom.

“One way each
Soul hath by which the infinite in reach
Lieth before him.”

A great many things that others easily do must remain for us impossible, however ambitious we may be to excel in them.

The more complete the success at which we aim, the narrower becomes the path that leads to it. It is never the Jack-of-all-trades, but the man who has bound himself down until he has become master of one, who succeeds. Read the stories in our magazines and the obituary notices in the newspapers that tell of the men who have succeeded in business, or professional, or literary

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life and see how invariably their secret was concentration — a stern self-denial, a voluntary narrowing of the field of endeavour, until every energy of mind and body was brought to bear upon the immediate problem that was most directly in line with their master purpose. They were able to focus their whole force upon their work, and they succeeded because they made themselves specialists in the subjects in which they were supremely interested.

And when we turn to the inner life, to the path in which that vital self which we call the Soul walks, we find it no great highway, in whose breadth one may journey without care or anxiety, but a narrow way which demands un-failing vigilance. The difficulties and dangers through which the path that leads a man's soul to its true life as a child of God threads its way are never entirely left behind.

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In our best endeavours temptations run by our side and keep pace with every step that we take. In the midst of some hotly contested battle, when we have pledged ourselves to win for the right and all that is best in us is aflame with courage, there comes sometimes, in a flash, the sickening consciousness that we are *capable* of giving up the struggle and betraying the cause that is dear to us.

We may bind ourselves by triple vows of allegiance; we may consecrate ourselves over and over again to our duty; but we never get to the point where we can feel that surrender is impossible for us. When we are most ardently reciting our creed, doubt is whispering in our ear. When we have been most deeply stirred by thoughts of God and His great purposes, there comes a moment of reaction, and sins from whose power we hoped that we had forever escaped clutch at us with evil fingers.

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We have all seen strange reversals of character and conduct in people whom we have known, changes for which it has greatly puzzled us to find an explanation. Take the familiar case of a family that has been faithful in deeds of Christian service, actively engaged in the work of the church. They move to a new neighbourhood and decide to take a short vacation from duty. Somehow the vacation indefinitely extends itself, and five years later you find them churchless, self-centered, and to all practical intents and purposes unchristian.

What has been the matter? Were they not sincere in the beginning? Yes; but they forgot that the path that leads to Godlike usefulness in life is a narrow one and that you cannot step aside from it without great danger of falling over the edge. The man who ignores that narrowness does so at his own peril. Being saved consists in keeping to the path.

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If ever anyone seemed safe it was the apostle Paul. He had burned his bridges behind him as he turned his back upon the faith of his fathers and renounced everything that had made up his life, in order to commit himself openly to the cause of Jesus Christ. He was devoted to his work, absorbed in the interests of the churches to whose needs he ministered. His experience of God had been most unusual and, more completely than any other disciple, he had penetrated to the heart of his Master. He dared to say of himself, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." And when he spoke to his fellow Christians it was with the tone of one who knew the certainty of the things of which he spake.

What then can Paul mean when, in the midst of his letter to the Corinthians, he tells them that he is engaged in constant struggle with his own passions,

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“lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”? What does it mean but that the great apostle trembled sometimes for himself as he realised the narrowness of the way which leadeth unto life?

In Morley's "Life of Gladstone" there is a most striking passage in which Mr. Gladstone, already an old man, declares that he supposed that he had led what might be called a moral life: that, so far as he knew, he had never been guilty of any of the more flagrant sins; yet that there had never been a day in his life when he had not been conscious that he was capable of the most sinful acts, and that all his life long he had realised that there was but a hair's breadth between himself and moral disaster.

The great Englishman was but giving expression to something that has

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been felt more or less keenly by every man or woman whose face has been set toward righteousness. Through the complicated problems of our daily life the path of truth and duty, if well defined, is exceedingly narrow. There seem to be dangers on both sides of the way. What but a line divides honesty from dishonesty? Suppose we are confronted with a choice between being kindly dishonest and selfishly upright — has not the path then grown pretty narrow? Is there not often the narrowest sort of a barrier between self-interest and self-forgetting service, and do we not find that even in our work for others we are remembering ourselves?

As our life purposes grow nobler and our aims higher the margin of safety seems to grow less and the difficulty of the path is intensified. Was it not so with Him who incarnated in himself “the way which leadeth unto life”?

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Remember the garden where in agony He fought His way through temptation to victory! What did it mean when, on the cross, He cried in one breath, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and a moment later, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," but that He was treading the narrowest part of a path that had been steadily closing in upon Him since childhood?

As a boy He had felt himself called to His Father's business. As a young man it had taken him away from the associations of home. Fresh from his baptism, and with God's voice still ringing in His ears, He found himself in the wilderness, tempted to betray His Father's cause, made aware of the subtle nearness of evil. Though the tempter left Him for a season, he met Him again and again at every turn. As time passed His ministry grew more limited and the

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narrowing path was lined with increasing dangers. In Gethsemane He was looking over its edge and was facing the fact that His Father had left it possible for Him, if He would, even then, to step down from it and walk thereafter in some way other than that which led through death to life.

It was our Lord's own experience that made Him earnest to point out to us the narrowness of the way. Looking into that experience as we find its records here, we become aware of what the boundaries were that marked out His path and defined its limits.

It was never the narrowness of a road defined by law: not a way shut in by commands that thunder at us "Thou shalt not!" We can never draw up a code of Christian conduct and declare it to be identical with the Way of Life. The narrowness involved in following Jesus Christ is not that of

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a path marked out by the observance of established rules.

Nor is it the narrowness of a rigid system of doctrine, which excludes all question and denounces as heretical and unchristlike all opinions that differ from it. The path that leads the soul of man to life is not to be found by threading our way along a chain of even the most logical propositions concerning God and this world.

Nor is it the narrowness of a life lived apart from the world, cut off from all human happiness. Christ enjoyed life, was perpetually interested in all sorts of people; His sympathy was wide enough to give Him points of contact with all classes. He might spend the night in prayer in a desert place, but He was at home at a wedding-feast and so perfectly at ease at the tables of rich and of poor that critics called Him "a man gluttonous, and a

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wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

The only narrowness that He knew was that which is inseparable from devotion to an overmastering purpose. Cheerfully He excluded everything that failed to advance the cause that was dearest to His heart. Resolutely He adhered to that path of self-forgetting service in which He felt that it was His Father's will that He should walk. Because His eye was single, His whole life was full of light and His heart was at peace. He was under the control of His purpose of establishing His Father's kingdom, and His concentration gave to His life the power and attraction of a river whose waters run deep and swift within the narrow channel to which its banks confine it.

We cannot face the purposes for which our Master lived and died, nor hear His "Follow me!" without feeling

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in our hearts that His way must be ours. Remember that it will prove narrow at times, so narrow that there will be no room upon it for interests that conflict with His. Thank God if we find that the path is thus closing in upon us, for it means that we are ascending.

Down in the plain the paths may run aimlessly hither and yon and highways be broad and easy; but mountain roads are always narrow and we must be watchful if we are climbing. The cliffs will often be near. We shall look over the edge and realise what a stumble might mean. We shall look ahead and wonder how we shall ever pass the next turn of the ridge. The margin of safety will seem small, but it is always sufficient.

The way that leadeth unto life may be narrow, but the outlook that one gets from it is as wide and the horizon as broad as the love of God.

Selfish Loyalty

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JOSHUA 7: 11, 12. *Israel hath sinned. . . . Therefore the children of Israel cannot stand before their enemies.*

SOME people, we think, cannot help being good. Whenever we feel so and are inclined to attribute the goodness of someone to the fact that his parents were honourable people and that his whole life has been surrounded by influences that naturally tend to keep him straight, it is a good thing to remember this man Achan. His story is an answer to the argument that character depends mainly, or entirely, upon birth and training and the circumstances that attend one's earliest years; that people are often good or bad through no effort or fault of their own, but because of the sorts of opportunities that happen to open before

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them ; that the thief, given the honest man's training, would have been as upright as the best of us. This comfortable-sounding theory breaks down when it meets the case of Achan. The moral of his life seems to be, that chances to be good are, after all, only chances ; that a man has to reach out and lay hold on them if they are really to become his.

If ever there was a man who appeared to have every chance it was Achan, the son of Carmi, of the tribe of Judah. All the circumstances of his life, all the influences brought to bear upon him by his surroundings, seem to have united to make it easy and natural for him to be a devout follower of his father's God and a serviceable member of his ancestral nation. See how much had been done for him!

By birth he belonged to the leading tribe of Israel, the descendants of Judah. We get the prevalent estimate of Judah's

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fortune in the dying blessing of Jacob, where the patriarch is represented as saying, "Judah, thee shall thy brethren praise: . . . the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be." Long centuries later it was the pride of the early Jewish Christians to trace the lineage of their blessed Master back through the generations to Judah, the head of this great family.

His early life had surrounded Achan with an atmosphere which fostered the religious faith that was part of his heritage. He had been born in a tent, at some one of the many stopping places on the long pilgrimage through the desert. As a boy he had lived among men and women to whom the presence and guidance of Jehovah was the one overshadowing fact of life. The simple forms of their worship kept

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always before them the thought of that God who both had brought them out from Egypt and had kindled their enthusiasm for the long journey. Through Moses' intimate acquaintance with the Lord, their flagging energies had been often recruited and their sometimes waning hopes revived. More and more they looked upon themselves as men with a great mission to accomplish, a service to render to their God. As they approached the promised land of which they had so long dreamed they saw in it not only a settled home for themselves after their years of desert life, but a place where the glory of their God might be exalted by victories over His enemies and where His worship might permanently be established.

Achan had been born into and brought up in this faith. He had been taught that simple obedience to the will of Jehovah was the secret of success and

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happiness. The experiences through which he had but recently passed must have strengthened immensely his sense of God's trustworthiness. By exact attention to the divine will, as expressed through Moses and Joshua, the nation had seen its long-deferred hopes realised. Jordan had been crossed, they were encamped in the Promised Land, and, in the first engagement of the campaign, they had taken the important city of Jericho without loss. Faith had grown into certainty. They had learned that so long as they stood shoulder to shoulder exalting their national welfare above each one's individual interest, so long as they were true to one another and to the covenant that bound them to their God, they could be assured of victory.

Achan had shared in these recent events, so that, to the advantages of birth and early training, he added that of

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personal experience of God's goodness to those who obeyed Him. Furthermore, Achan could not plead ignorance in excuse for his deed. No man who had innocently disobeyed would have hidden away so carefully the booty that he had taken. When at last publicly accused of disobedience, he made no attempt to deny that he had known of the command forbidding any pillaging of the conquered city.

Birth, training, experience, knowledge of God's will — all these had given him such chances to make the most of life as many men have longed for in vain. And even when he had run counter to them all and had taken of the forbidden treasure, there was still left to him one last chance — the opportunity for voluntary confession before discovery.

With all Achan's faults, one can scarcely suppose him ever to have

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dreamed that his act could have such far-reaching consequences. He certainly never imagined that a wedge of gold and two hundred shekels of silver and a goodly garment were going to result in a defeat for the army and a delay in the execution of the divine plan. It was not until, from the lips of Joshua, the proclamation went forth that the sin of some individual had been the real cause of the unexpected defeat at Ai that Achan began to realise all the consequences involved in his dishonesty. He had left still his one, last chance. Joshua issued his proclamation in the evening, bidding all the people appear before their leaders on the following morning, that the guilty person might be singled out and punished. Poor Achan had a night in which to think it all over. If in the darkness he had found his way through the camp to the place where the priests of God kept watch around

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the sacred ark; if he had sought Joshua in his tent and had freely confessed to him the sin, whose seriousness he was only beginning to appreciate; or if the next morning, when all the people were assembled, he had voluntarily stepped out and frankly and penitently acknowledged that under the floor of his tent lay hidden the cause of the whole trouble; if he, who had had so many chances to prove himself a man after God's own heart, had taken even this last opportunity, the final outcome of his story might have been very different.

The best of influences can save no man against his own will. Boyhood training and present opportunities can never avail to redeem one who turns his back upon them. Friends and the daily influences that surround him—yes, even God himself—can but offer him advice, help, opportunities, affection, invitations, which he must himself accept

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if they are ever to enter into his life. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Achan thought that his treasures were well worth the risk. God could not know; Joshua could never discover where they lay hidden. When the investigation had ended and all this excitement and outcry had died down, it would be very pleasant to have this extra capital at hand for use in developing that bit of farming land which he expected as his share of the conquered country and on which he hoped to perpetuate the honourable name of Achan.

With his mind made up to this, he stood silent, unrepentant; at first confident and secretly amused. Then, as the circle narrowed and the net seemed closing in upon him, how confidence must have given way to uneasiness and soon have changed to terror. Shivering with fear, he saw discovery approaching.

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Slowly his sin was finding him out, and there was no escape. He stood at last publicly branded as a traitor to his God, a betrayer of his brothers' interests: successful in his resistance to the influences that all his life long had been claiming him for righteousness.

And what shall we say was the matter with him? How explain him? If we are asked to put our finger upon the root of his trouble, where in his character shall we find it? Certainly there must have been something pretty radically wrong with a man who could sell himself for so pitiful a price. But what was it? It is true that Achan seems pretty far away from us, and that we have only the bare outline of his story; but from the scanty details recorded here, we can see the symptoms clearly enough to diagnose his disease with a fair degree of accuracy.

Behind his disobedience lay a conviction that he knew better than Jehovah

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did. He acted contrary to the command that had come through Joshua because he ventured to question the wisdom of it. He was disloyal to his leader. There was no reason, so he felt, why those who had borne the brunt of the battle should not be rewarded from the spoils. Others might be foolish enough to obey, but Achan could not let such a chance slip. Why should all the treasures of Jericho be devoted to the service of the tabernacle? Did the priests want to get all the wealth of the nation into their own hands?

It is at first glance a bit puzzling to know why the Israelites should have been forbidden to touch the spoil of Jericho. In those ruthless times it was certainly not out of sympathy for the conquered. Perhaps it was rather because Joshua would not have his army burdened with the mass of plunder that would otherwise have accumulated. A

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series of trying campaigns stretched before the army, and it must not be handicapped by a lot of unnecessary baggage. Success would often depend upon celerity of motion and unexpectedness of attack.

Then, too, the simplicity of life which had become characteristic of the people during their long years of desert wandering, their freedom from enervating habits, and their capacity for endurance must be preserved. By preventing them from sharing in the luxuries which had contributed so much to the weakness of their enemies, Joshua would make it easier for them to maintain their sturdy independence.

Far more important was the maintenance of that national spirit which long years of discipline had formed in them. Their fathers had come out of Egypt an unorganised horde of slaves. For generations previously they had

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been under the hand of task-masters ; forbidden to act together ; compelled to give up all semblance of organisation ; as dependent upon their masters and as incapable of intelligent co-operation as were the slaves in our own Southern States after the war. But the desert had had its effect upon them. Common perils had drawn them together. At first petulant and childish, they had grown strong and self-controlled. Moses had given them laws, a social organisation, a religion and a national hope. Ties of kinship and worship and ambition had united them, and they crossed the Jordan an army devoted to a common purpose. They had learned that their strength lay in union, in each man forgetting himself and serving as a soldier of the common good. They had learned to fight, not as individuals or tribes, but as members of one great family, contending for the interests of their brothers

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and their God. In this lay the secret of their strength and the assurance of their success. And Joshua knew that he must maintain it. He wanted, not a band of individual plunderers, but an army made formidable by its unselfish devotion to the cause for which it fought.

The real trouble with Achan was that he could not feel any enthusiasm for that method of conducting a campaign. He was proud of his birth and of his people; "national honour" and "the common good" were well enough to talk about in public, but his private question was always, "What is there in it for me?" Unless he got some immediate personal benefit out of the fall of Jericho, he did not see much cause for rejoicing that its walls had been laid low. To have the interests of his brothers so much at heart that it would not occur to him to look out first of all for himself; to find his greatest happiness,

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not in secretly fingering the booty that he had been able to hide away, but in successes that had come to all — these were points of view which he refused to take. He fought with the army, but he fought for himself, and not the honour of his God, nor the increasing conquests of his people, but only the growth of the things of which he could say, "This and this is mine!" was his standard of success.

Achan acted for himself alone, yet his sin had its inevitable effect upon the lives of others. And in this is the paradox of selfishness: that other people always share in its cost. Estimates of the value of life have changed since Joshua's times. We shudder at the extremity of the punishment which could involve the whole family of a traitor with him. Perhaps they had been guilty of aiding him in the concealment of his theft. But that primitive

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Arab sentiment which identified a man's interests with those of his family has a certain foundation in fact. A man's wrongdoing, his selfishness, his hidden sin has always its effect upon those who are nearest to him. There is a family solidarity which still makes us sharers in the misfortunes of our loved ones, and which, thank God, often proves its strength by steadying us in moments of temptation and inspiring us to be true to the expectations of those who believe us faithful.

More far-reaching than the effect of Achan's sin upon his nearest friends was the surprising influence that it exerted upon the fortunes of his people. Because he, one insignificant man, had stolen in secret a goodly Babylonish mantle and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold worth fifty shekels, an army of three thousand men who went up to take the little city

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of Ai met public defeat and fled in disorder.

The effect seems so tremendously out of proportion to the cause that we wonder whether it has not been exaggerated. Can the faithlessness of one man defeat an army? Can the sin of one bring disaster and disappointment to other men with whose interests he is closely linked? Has the church of Jesus Christ ever found her progress blocked, her hopes delayed, her enemies triumphant because just a few of those on whom she counted proved faithless? Have men whom we should win for our Master ever refused to yield to His claims because the life of some one among His followers was a stumbling block in their way?

The cause to which we are pledged, the kingdom for which we fight, requires for its establishment a united army. Selfishness in even a few of us, the

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followers of the unselfish Jesus, has, more often than one likes to count, been responsible for unexpected reverses. Man's faithlessness to trusts reposed in him may defeat the plans of God. Achan, the son of Carmi, of the tribe of Judah, could cripple the arm of Jehovah.

In the first, deep gloom of the disaster even Joshua felt that God had failed His people. He tore his clothes and from the dust where he lay cried, "Alas, O Lord Jehovah, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over the Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to cause us to perish? . . . Oh Lord, what shall I say, . . . and what wilt Thou do for Thy great name?" Joshua was terribly worried over God's reputation! But God answered indignantly, "Get thee up! the fault is not mine. Israel hath sinned; therefore the children of Israel cannot

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stand before their enemies. Not my unreadiness, nor my insufficiency, but your own sinful conduct is the true explanation of this disaster. You and I together always win and always shall win; but, you know, we must be really together. The same laws of obedience to duty, of perfect truthfulness in word and deed, of sincerity of life, of unselfish, loving service that control me, your God, must govern you. Unless you be with me in heart, through and through, I cannot accomplish with you my plans, I can promise you no success in your endeavours."

There are two sorts of weakness that we have to reckon with in our alliances with God. The first is the weakness incidental to our humanity. We are men and women of distinctly limited capacities, imperfect in vision, defective in will power, inadequate in strength for the great tasks beside which

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we measure ourselves. God provides for this incompleteness of our nature and supplements it with His own divine power. This is the weakness out of which we are made strong, through trust in Him to whom all things are possible.

The other is the weakness of unrepented, unforgiven sin. It cripples even the plans of the Infinite Father, for it makes men whom He had hoped to use for His purposes unserviceable to Him. He can win no victories with the arms of soldiers like Achan. Our Master himself faced Jerusalem with sorrow because, for all His love and His desire to help its inhabitants, they would have none of Him. Before the indifference and lack of sympathy of His fellow-townsmen in Nazareth He could do no mighty works because of their unbelief.

Lives put trustingly into the hands of God and devoted to His purposes

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become capable of great achievements ; but even He can accomplish nothing with those who will not fall in with the spirit of His plans, who do not sympathise with His devotion to the welfare of all His children, and who reserve, in some deep corner of their hearts, a place for treasures which He has declared to be contraband of war.

Ai, on its little hill, with its few defenders, achieving unexpected victory, is fairly typical of a good many similar scenes in our own lives. And Joshua, kneeling in despair, bears a decided resemblance to the attitude in which it is not an unknown thing for us to find ourselves. When wholesale disaster follows a righteous attempt, we wonder in our disappointment where God could have been and why He seems so neglectful of those who try to serve Him. When His soldiers suffer a defeat and His work is delayed and His church

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seems to lag in her advance, like Joshua we begin to wonder what people will think of a God whose undertakings meet with so many delays; and sometimes, in our hearts, we ask whether it can possibly be that He does not care!

Before we accuse Him of desertion and despair of His triumph, let us see whether we have anything hidden away in our tent; whether beneath the surface of our lives there are concealed interests that are incompatible with His designs — purposes that cross the line of His. Are we soldiers in His army simply because it is our heart's desire to serve the brotherhood to which we belong; or do we, in our heart of hearts, calculate what we may be able here or in heaven to get out of it for ourselves? Have we given Him all that we say we have, or are we secretly defrauding Him of that which we think He can scarcely miss?

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There are two kinds of theft for which God holds men guilty. One consists in acquiring that which we have no right to possess; the second, in defrauding others by retaining that which we owe them. A goodly Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold may not have the fascination for us that they had for Achan. Yet we may be robbing someone of the respect and kindly interest and self-sacrificing service that are his due. We may rob our employers or our business associates of the time and thought we ought to put into our work. Parents may rob their children of the loving guidance and the religious training that in their baptismal vows they have promised to afford them. We may defraud our families by making them no happier by our presence. We may steal from our country by neglecting our duties as citizens, and from our God by giving only a passing

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attention to interests in which we ought to be absorbed.

These are the unpaid obligations that constitute our thefts. Within our reach are resources capable of meeting them all. Within us are capacities for understanding and sympathising with and working for others such as no one knows that we possess. We have, locked away, visions of God, experiences of His goodness, blessings from His hand which we have never thought of sharing with others. Strength for life's burdens, wisdom for life's problems, faith for life's struggles, reserves of tenderness upon which we must learn to draw — these are the hidden treasures which God bids us learn the happiness of scattering. This is the capital for whose concealment He holds us, like Achan the son of Carmi, responsible.

The Christlike God

The Christlike God

JOHN 14:9. *Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*

TO Philip no evidence could quite take the place of his own eyesight. To be able to say "I have seen it" was his ultimate proof of a disputed fact. Jesus one day found him in Galilee and said, "Follow me," and Philip looked and followed. The next day Philip went to Nathanael, saying, "We have found Him of whom . . . the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth," and when Nathanael questioned, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he simply answered, "Come and see," for he felt sure that the sight would carry its own conviction.

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Now Philip had seen Christ for three years. He had had opportunities for the most intimate inspection. In the simplicity of the daily life of the little band who surrounded Him, Jesus had little privacy. Philip saw Him in the flush of enthusiasm addressing the crowds who gathered to hear Him, and he saw Him at nightfall worn out by the labours of the day. The disciple had been satisfied with his Master. He was content to share His lot and to commit himself to the mission to which Jesus devoted His life. Philip's eyes had found no criticism of his Lord; the more he saw of Him the more he was willing to trust His leadership. He saw truth in Him and gradually he made that truth his own, learning to put his Master's principles into practice, proving by personal experiment the happiness of treating people as Christ told him to, finding that obedience to

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his Lord's rules of life brought him a satisfaction, a peace of heart, a sense of the worthfulness of life such as he had not been able to get elsewhere.

All this Philip had, but he wanted more. Christ had taught him a new way of living; he wanted to see where that way would lead one who followed it faithfully to the end. Christ's words had drawn for him a new ideal whose perfection he had no thought of challenging, but he wanted proof that the ideal could be realised. He wanted evidence that there was something in the nature of things which could guarantee the ultimate triumph of Jesus' principle of loving service, that there was "a power not himself that made for righteousness." Philip had received a gospel from Jesus, but it could not satisfy him until he could see God behind it; and when Jesus assured His friends that through these good tidings

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that He had given them they would come to their Father, Philip expressed the one supreme unsatisfied desire of their hearts when he cried, "Show us the Father! You have shown us the truth, now give us God!"

How well we recognise the mood of this man, Philip of Bethsaida! Like him we have found in Jesus Christ the great Teacher. His lessons have lost none of their power with the passing years. With ever-increasing persuasiveness His teachings commend themselves to men. In our better moments His ideals are ours and His commands challenge our obedience. We are content to learn of Him, for we find gathered up into His message the best that all other men have taught. We ask no more from words than His words give us. We have no hopes that can do for us as much as His. But there come times when words are not enough; when ideals seem woven

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of the frailest dreams ; when the realities of life weight down our hopes ; when we doubt the feeble evidence of our own inadequate experience. We look along that Way which He has bidden us follow, whose goal He has assured us is our Father's house, and, our hearts cry out, " Master, thou hast given us much ; now give us God : ' show us the Father and it sufficeth us ! ' " " Jesus saith, . . . Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip ? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Does Philip know Him ? If anyone can say " Yes " to that question, it must surely be this man who has been Christ's intimate companion, in daily association with His work. Philip thinks that he has understood his Lord, that he has entered into the full meaning of His life, but Jesus' answer tells him that he has missed something which would have made his question impossible. Philip has

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learned many lessons that have equipped him for the tests of life, but he has been too absorbed in his lessons to make full acquaintance with his Teacher. Because Philip only partially knows his Master, Jesus' words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," must seem a very unsatisfactory reply ; one of those conversational paradoxes which are not to be taken too literally ; another puzzling sentence to be added to that long list of curious sayings which he has heard his Lord utter. He looks up into His face, and while his eyes see only his friend, Jesus of Nazareth, his heart still cries out, "Show me God !"

"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Here is Jesus confronting a man who earnestly seeks God and assuring him that there is no need to seek farther. Here is the self-forgetting Man of Nazareth, who cared nothing for His own honour or the praise of

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men, who asked only for a chance to lay down His life for the sake of those who needed help ; calmly identifying himself with His Father in heaven and assuming for His life divine value. If His words mean anything, He is saying that He is more than a messenger, more than a voice that speaks for God, more than a teacher sent to fill men's minds with lessons of repentance and self-sacrifice ; that His person and His life have a value which explains the power that His words have over men's hearts ; that those who grow to know Him as a friend will need no longer cry, "Show us the Father," for they will have found in Him the spirit of God incarnate among men.

We have too often thought that we could separate Christ's teachings from himself ; that His work was to set forth principles of life which need no other support than their own evident truthfulness. Our Lord's heart was set

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upon getting men to live in a certain way: to take an attitude of childlike trust toward God and of brotherly service toward men. What He wanted was to induce them to surrender their lives to the purposes for which He worked and suffered. When men were willing to do this He was content.

Of course, there is truth in this. Jesus' supreme test by which He decided whether a man was saved was this of surrender to the spirit of loving service. He made it clear in the parable of the judgment scene that God's estimates of men are based upon the degree in which they have loved their neighbours as themselves and have borne the burdens of their brothers.

When we find a man who has made this the rule of his conduct: who has set himself to live the life of a child of God in the spirit of Jesus Christ, who is filled with the spirit of the Master,

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but who finds it impossible to reduce to logical terms and clearcut doctrines his impressions of His Saviour, whose reason cannot assent to the claims that others make for Him, we cannot refuse him admission to our Father's family. We gladly welcome all who love Jesus Christ to a share in the work of bringing in the coming kingdom. But we may feel that such an one has missed much; that he must often still cry "Show me the Father!" when we have seen Him in the face of His Son; that, like Philip, he has not known fully the Master whose word he obeys.

Though this be not a conviction about which we should ever attempt to dogmatise, neither is it one upon which we should be silent; nor is it one to which we should give formal assent, retaining it in our creed, but finding it the expression of a mystery whose value

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we have never thought of discovering. When, with Paul, we assert our belief in our Lord's divinity, declaring that in Him dwells all the fulness of God ; when we confess that in Him our Father in heaven came to earth, are we dealing with realities or with theories ? with matters of vital religious importance, or with theological speculations which, mighty though they may be, are outside the realm of the practical affairs of life ? Is this a matter that concerns our minds alone or has it a permanent value for our sinful, hungry, human hearts ?

Faith in our Lord's divinity has sprung always from the hearts that have known Him best. The result of intimate friendship with Him is the conviction that in Him God dwelt, for no other explanation seems adequate. When we assert our faith that he who has known Christ has known the

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Father, we are dealing not with vague unreality, but with the sober facts of His life and work. Look at some of the evidence upon which it rests.

We find His teachings standing the test of the varied experiences of generation after generation and recognised by men with growing clearness as containing the ultimate principles of life. Men find their highest hopes realised in the kingdom whose coming He predicted.

Behind His words we see a life that was free from sin, whose spotlessness none who knew Him ever assailed. His heart, with all its humility and self-denial, with all its delicate sensitiveness to the presence of evil, shows absolutely no trace of any sense of sin.

Though He would not let men make Him their king or show Him any honours, He frankly claimed that He stood in a unique relation to God,

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and that His Father in heaven spoke often with Him in the familiar intercourse of heart with heart. He conceived of himself as sent to reveal to men the character and will of God, and so completely did He identify himself with His Father that He could say to men, either, "Seek the kingdom of God," or "Come, follow me," and mean the same thing.

The more earnestly we ponder these familiar facts of the supremacy of His gospel, the sinlessness of His life, and His own claim that men in Him might find God, the more difficult it becomes to arrive at any other explanation than this that He gave of himself. As we let ourselves be mastered by His Spirit and devote ourselves to His purposes, we have borne in upon our hearts the conviction that through Him we have found God.

Put it into the simplest terms and

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the practical religious value of our confession of the divinity of our Lord is that through it we express our faith that God the Creator and Ruler of all is like Jesus of Nazareth. Our interest in asserting that truth is, not so much that we want to describe the Christ — His own life speaks for itself — but that we want to describe God. We want to say that the Father is like this Son; that the heart of the Infinite is as tender and loving, as self-sacrificing and forgiving, as was the heart of Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost; that the qualities which are characteristic of God are those that men found in Jesus Christ; and that any quality which is not consistent with the character of the Man of Nazareth cannot exist in His Father in heaven.

By confessing our Lord's divinity we declare our faith that His ways of working are God's ways, that His sympathy

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for men's need is God's sympathy, that His faith in men's better selves is God's faith, that the purposes to which He devoted himself incessantly throughout His ministry, and for which He at last willingly died, are the purposes for which the infinite wisdom and power of God are at work; and that the kingdom of righteousness and kindness and faithfulness for which He sacrificed himself is the surely coming kingdom of our Father, destined in the end to win its way in the hearts of all men.

This it was that Philip had missed. Long as he had been with His Master, he had not known Him. He had not recognised God, though the Son of God had been near him every day. There is a note of sadness in our Lord's voice as He asks, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip?"

So long a time! Yes, three full years;

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but what are they to the centuries that have gone by since then, to the generation after generation through which the spirit of the Christ has been with His brothers in this His Father's world? Yet those who, like Philip, have stood near Him have so little known Him! so often have had no eyes to see Him as He is! Men have cried to Him, "Lord! Lord!" but have given Him a formal worship that has been dead at heart. To-day, in the city that crucified Him, His followers build in His honour great churches, convents and monasteries, hospices and schools. Its streets are thronged with pilgrims who would do Him honour; on its altars priests burn incense to His name. Their God is a God of warring sects, a God of jealousy and envy, a God easily pleased with empty praise and tawdry splendour. And all the while, above the city,

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stands the crucified One, asking sadly, "Is this all that two thousand years of acquaintance with me has taught you about the things for which I care? Have I been so long time with you and do ye not know me, and through me understand your Father?"

Or, men who have scorned the formalism of ritual worship have built up about Him systems of creeds and doctrines in which the letter of the law has deadened the life of His spirit. They have made access to Him a privilege to be won only at the cost of intellectual freedom. Men have often fought for His divinity who have had a God very different in character from Jesus of Nazareth. Because they have not really known His spirit they have not understood through Him their Father's will.

Or, again, many who have found Him in the secret of their hearts, who have come to Him weary and overladen and

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have shared their burdens with Him, who have learned to say with certainty, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," have contented themselves with a private piety that forgets the work which their Redeemer bids them share with Him. They can know the Master fully only by going to look for Him in the places where His interests lie, where His plans are being carried out and where He is eternally busy about His Father's business. Of many a loving but inactive disciple He asks, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me? Dost thou not understand the responsibilities that are involved in friendship with me? He that findeth his life shall lose it."

"He findeth not who seeks his own,
The soul is lost that 's saved alone.
Not on one favoured forehead fell
Of old the fire-tongued miracle,
But flamed o'er all the thronging host
The baptism of the Holy Ghost."

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He who lamented over the city that He loved crying, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!" grieves still over a world that knows but little of Him, crying, "How often would I — and ye would not!" — grieves over us, people whom He knows, men and women whom He calls by name; asking of each in turn, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou — and *thou* — and THOU not know me?"

The question comes as more than the echo of His words to Philip, comes with the force of a freshly spoken challenge of a still living Saviour. Why should it be incredible to us, who believe in the life after death, who know that Calvary did not end all, who have heard the

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testimony of the men of God in all ages to the reality of their Lord's presence with them—why for a moment incredible that He be still speaking to our souls? He has been a long time with us. He was with us when, as children in our mothers' arms, those who loved us gave our lives into His keeping and prayed for His blessing upon us. Their dreams for us were His, and perhaps here in His Father's house they publicly dedicated us to lives of service in His kingdom.

He was with us as we grew to consciousness of self and of this world about us. As our hearts, filled with the hopes of youth and great ambitions and noble resolves, were torn within us, and truth warred against falsehood and the spirit of service fought with selfishness for the mastery of our lives, "Then, though you knew it not, I was with you," He declares. "I spoke to you by many

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voices, which you did not know were mine. I tried in a thousand ways to make myself known to you. I gave you teachers who spoke often about me, I let you see my character reflected in the lives of people who were near you. Sometimes I thought that you had found me. Once when you were sick you felt me near, you trusted me a little, you seemed dimly to perceive God's spirit with you. The memory of that time still lingers in your mind and you recall it as you sing :

‘The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain ;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.’

But when you grew well you no longer needed me. You let me go ; but I have not gone. I have stayed with you, waiting, hoping. I have tried to speak to you when you were in

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sorrow, to tell you that death can have no fears for those that love me. I have been with you in your prosperity, in your temptations, in your perplexities, in your sins. Yes, I am with you now, as you gather in the church that bears my name, as within you stirs the old hunger for God, as your hearts cry, 'Show us the Father!' I am here still loving, still agonising over you, still pleading, 'Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me? Do ye not yet understand?'"

And we who have lived much without Him ask, "Lord, understand what? What is it to know Thee?" And He answers, "Understand all that you have missed in missing me. Know that I hold the clue to life's problems, the strength that you need for life's battles, the power that can hold you firmly to all your good resolutions, making you 'cheerful and helpful and firm.' To

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know me is to find forgiveness and peace and the joy of service."

Many of us who have called ourselves His comrades have not really known Him. We have seen him distorted by our own mistaken ideas, overlaid by what we have wanted Him to be. To know Him is to discover His Father's purpose, which is: the radical transformation of all men until they resemble their divine Original. It means finding that a great many things which we have put last come first in God's schedule of values, and that God wants us not only to recognise what His hopes for this world are, but to realise them. To know Him means that we begin to think of all our possessions as things held in trust for others, that we look into the sources from which our money comes and that we assure ourselves that we are not receiving the price of vice because our property is rented for evil

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purposes ; or of injustice because those who toil for us are ill-treated ; or of unlawful transactions executed by those who are our agents.

To know Him means that our prayers become pledges of action, that our worship is preparation for service, that our church becomes not an end in itself but a means efficient for the accomplishment of our Father's will. To know Him is to learn the supremacy of His rule ; to find in Him not only an ideal for life, but a power that makes it attainable ; to discover that the best for which we have dared to hope is true, that our dreams of a heaven where we shall have won the victory over the sins that so easily beset us and drag us down is realisable here and now by His help.

We may not have been able to see God in Jesus Christ. We may not be able to say with certainty that we have ever found God, for while we have heard

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others talk of His presence and have seen what seems to be His influence at work in lives around us, He has seemed unreal to us. We have tried to live without Him, tried to be honest, to be kind, to be true to our better selves, tried to get the most out of life ; but the effort has not brought us very far. Each week we loosen a little the grip upon our hopes, we barely hold our ground. The world seems too much for us. Somewhere there is a God, but we have not met Him, and when men speak of His goodness and His power to help, our hearts cry, "Show us the Father and it is enough!"

That cry never goes unanswered. He whose spirit is in the hearts of all who seek God answers, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." When, like Saul in his blindness, we

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ask, "Who art Thou, Lord?" He answers, "I am Jesus of Nazareth. Become my friend, yield yourself to my love, devote your life to the purposes that are dear to me and, behold, through me you shall find your Father."

Bethany

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LUKE 21 : 37. *Every day He was teaching in the temple ; and every night He went out, and lodged in the mount that is called Olivet.*

MATT. 21 : 17. *And He . . . went forth out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there.*

BY merely changing the name and substituting for Bethany some town within connecting distance of the city, these verses might become bits from the biography of any one of the thousands of men and women who stream into New York every morning and out again to their homes every night.

There is about any great city a certain quality which captures our imagination. We feel the attraction of its size. It draws us, often in spite of ourselves. There is a glamour about its

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life that smaller communities lack, and a nervous energy that seems to vitalise those who are in touch with it. And when we add to size and activity the charms of age and of historic association, we make the appeal of a great city irresistibly strong.

It is impossible for us to realise all that Jerusalem meant to Jesus Christ. The name of the city must have been intimately interwoven with His earliest recollections. Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph "went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover." First as a baby, later as a growing boy, Jesus must have gone with them. To a quick-witted, thoughtful child that journey would have been the great event of the year. Child-like, he would anticipate it for months. Then would come the delicious bustle of preparation, the packing up of clothes and provisions, the closing of the house, the saddling

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of the animals, and the departure at dawn in a great caravan of friends and relatives. Travel would be slow with so many women and children, and five or six days might pass before the last turn in the road would spread before them the walls and housetops of the sacred city, all dominated by the great dome of the temple. Coming thus upon the city from the north, the sight is enough to stir the pulses of the most casual traveller. What then must have been the feelings of those to whom, by every claim of religion and patriotism and kinship, the venerable city was inexpressibly dear?

The Son of Mary had been taught by his pious mother the history of Jerusalem. He knew the stories of her early splendour, of the kings who had reigned within her walls, of the sieges that she had sustained and of the unconquerable faith in God which had

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nerved her inhabitants to victory against overwhelming odds. The Holy City was the fairy town of His dreams.

But as He grew older He learned that there was another side to the story. The city was no longer in the hands of His own people, and behind her present subjection to the Romans stretched a long record of defeat, of faithlessness to God, of martyred prophets, of all that was ignoble and unlovely. Yet He loved the old town; He risked everything to save her from her perils, and when it became evident that she was past redemption, He wept, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

Our Lord was drawn as we are by the call of the city. What part did the city

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that He loved play in His life? To Him Jerusalem meant temptation. At the very beginning of His ministry, when He was fixing upon the way by which He was to accomplish the work that His Father had given Him to do, He had seen himself in imagination carried to Jerusalem and set upon a pinnacle of the temple, while in His ear whispered the temptation to secure popularity by ways that were unworthy of the Son of Man.

The city with its crowds eager for new sensations perpetually suggested compromise. If He would but adapt His message to fit the people's expectation, He might do with them what He would. He was constantly confronted by the temptation to use other standards than those by which God measures success and failure. The love of money had undermined the religion of the prophets and the very courts of the temple had become

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a commercial exchange. The life around Him was insincere, superficial, unreal, and although the religiously inclined made loud professions, He saw that all their good works were done only that they might be seen of men. He, who "was in all points tempted like as we are," felt the deadly taint of that atmosphere and knew the subtle poison that it could infuse into hearts that had come to it with honourable ambitions and right principles of life.

Though He endured temptation and came through it undefeated, Jerusalem demanded of Him sacrifice. He knew that the city that He loved would be cruel to Him. He knew the fate of others before Him who had spoken plainly. For a long time He had known that He must go up to Jerusalem, not to enjoy, but to suffer. In other towns people who had once listened eagerly to His teaching might

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become indifferent; only in fanatical Jerusalem would indifference grow into hatred, of such intensity that it would cost Him His life.

Yet, clearly foreseeing all, He left the safety of the open country and steadfastly set His face toward Jerusalem. He could not keep away from the city because, with all her perils, she represented opportunity. Nowhere else had He such chances to speak to the leaders of His people. To impress the capital was to exert an influence that would be felt in the most distant villages of Judæa and Galilee. Into her at the time of the Passover was gathered all that was best and worst in His fellow countrymen: their pride and their faith, their fanaticism and their loyalty, their intolerance and their undying hope.

He had no illusions about the condition of things within her walls. His

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patriotism never blinded him to the greatness of her needs. He frankly faced the darkest of her problems and laid His finger on the plague spots that were corrupting her citizens. Their self-righteous satisfaction He rebuked, condemning the unreality of their elaborate religious ritual and telling them that true greatness must be measured in terms of service. That materialistic spirit which had made of His Father's house a place of merchandise roused in Him a righteous indignation which made short work of the merchants and the money changers. Through the fog of questions with which their casuistry had enveloped religion, He cut to a clear, short summary of man's whole duty toward his God and his neighbour.

Every day, until the storm broke upon Him, He was in the temple teaching over and over again the lesson

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of human brotherhood and the love of God. Day after day He spent himself unreservedly on the multitude. For to the Son of Man the city was not a place for getting, but for giving, and He went daily into it because nowhere else was there so great an opportunity for service.

But when the day's work was ended and the crowds had scattered, "every night He went out, and lodged in the mount that is called Olivet," going, as Matthew tells us, to Bethany. During the last eventful week Bethany was His headquarters, as it seems to have been upon His earlier visits to Jerusalem. The road from the city gate crossed the brook Kidron, then climbed part way up the slope of Olivet and wound around the shoulder of the mountain to the other side, where Bethany lay.

The distance was not great, nor the climb very difficult; an hour's walk

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brought Him to His friends' house in the village. He could have slept in the crowded city in an inn or a friend's house. He was at home in cities and He must often have stayed over night in Jerusalem on His boyhood visits with His parents. But He loved the open country better. He had been born in a suburb; He had lived till He was thirty years old in a Galilean village and, when sunset came, He turned instinctively away from the confusion and the heat of the noisy town. The walk was not wearisome, but a joy; the quiet of the mountain-side, the freshness of the night air, the friendly stars, meant rest to One whose heart all day had been breaking as He faced men who would not understand.

He loved nature, open fields and flowers and mountain-sides, for in their beauty He saw His Father's goodness. He drew strength from the hills, and the trees spoke to Him of

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God's kindly care. In Bethany were a few men and women who loved Him, and in the little town He could sleep soundly. Then in the morning came the walk back to the city, so early that on the way He hungered and sought fruit from a disappointing fig-tree. Refreshed by a night of rest, He was ready for the strain of the day, and all day long in His heart was the peace that the night had brought Him.

To the Christ Bethany stood for the things that bring many of us an hour's journey out from the city six nights in the week. He would understand the relief of leaving work behind, of closing an office and coming out where one can see the sky without looking up between narrow walls and where God's night winds blow freely. He would rejoice in the outlines of the mountain yonder and in the evening stillness of this hillside town.

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Yet, from even the brief records that are left us, we see clearly that, to Jesus, Bethany was always more than a place for sleep and quiet. He had friends there whose society He enjoyed. There were Mary and Martha and Lazarus, who looked eagerly for His coming; there was Simon, who gave in His honour a supper at which there seem to have been many guests. He not only accepted His friends' hospitality and shared in their rejoicings and let them do Him kindnesses, but He recognised that they had claims upon Him, and, tired though He might be, He gladly put himself at their disposal.

When news came to Him that Lazarus was dead He did not content himself with a note of sympathy, but, from a long distance, returned to Bethany to do what He could for those who had lost their brother, and at the sight of their grief He wept. Jesus had entered

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into the neighbourliness of suburban life and knew that kindness of heart which makes us all feel that we have a part in the joys and sorrows of those who live near us. None would understand more readily than He the impulse which makes us wish that we could do something to show our sympathy for those into whose homes sickness or death has entered.

Bethany was within a Sabbath day's journey of Jerusalem, so that the people may have gone to worship in the temple. But if there was a synagogue there we can be in no uncertainty as to Jesus' attitude toward it. We know that it was His custom to go to the synagogue wherever He might be on the Sabbath day; and, more than that, to take some active part in the service. There must have been many things about the service that were distasteful to Him; with much of the theology that He heard,

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He would have little sympathy. He would see people in the congregation whose insincerity was apparent to Him ; but with all its faults Jesus deliberately identified himself with the existing church of His day, doing all in His power to correct its evils and to reform it from within. He remained a worker in its synagogues until they cast Him out.

Life in Bethany must have had its problems. There were poor people to be cared for and people criminally inclined to be punished. If there were questions of caring for the children in the village school ; if the taxes were unfairly levied ; if there had been a temperance question in Bethany, or an issue that concerned good government, can you imagine our Lord saying, " I am too weary to look into this. My interests are in the city and I cannot be bothered with these local matters when I come

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out here to rest"? Wherever He was, in town or country, He felt himself to be His brothers' keeper. To do His Father's will was so truly His meat and drink that one day when He was weary and hungry He grew so interested in the lives of a poor Samaritan woman and her friends that He forgot His need of the food that He had sent His disciples to purchase.

If we were asked what Orange means to us, we would not find it hard to answer. We find here much of the rest and quiet and health that our Master sought in Bethany. But suppose we are asked what we mean to Orange, can we answer as easily? Do our lives furnish a parallel to our Master's example? Do people find in us the same ready response that His friends found in Christ? Do we mean as much to them as we might? Do we love our actual neighbours? Do we look upon

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our church as a place for receiving or as a chance for service? And are we so actively concerned in increasing its efficiency that we can lose sight of our minor differences in an overwhelming unity of purpose which makes us one in our Father's work? Do charitable institutions find us not only generous, but personally interested in them? And do we feel an individual responsibility toward all matters that concern the welfare of our community?

If it is hard to follow our Master's example in this modern Bethany, how much harder becomes the task when we turn toward the city where so many of us spend our working hours!

If our Lord could stand with us on Eagle Rock and see New York against the skyline, as He once stood with His disciples on the Mount of Olives and looked toward Jerusalem, we might cry in their words, "Master,

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behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings ! What towers and bridges and what endless streets !” And our Lord would answer us sadly as He answered them, for His eye would see not the buildings, but the lives that they sheltered ; He would point to the same sins that crucified Him once in Jerusalem and He would bow himself again beneath the burden of His brothers’ needs.

When those who led the Christ to Calvary sought for one who should carry His cross, we are told that they took none of the crowd that followed Him, but that “they laid hold upon one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and laid on him the cross, to bear it after Jesus.” Simon, coming in from the country, was intent upon the business that brought him to Jerusalem, but God had other work for him to do that day.

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To-morrow morning trains and electric cars and ferries will hurry into the city thousands of men and women who have rested to-day in this and neighbouring towns. As you go over or under the river and enter the city, your Father will meet you, as He met Simon the Cyrenian, coming from the country, and lay on you, if you be willing, the cross, to bear it after Jesus. It will be the cross of temptation. Following Him, you must fight all day against a materialism which conceives of no realities but those that can be measured in terms of dollars and cents. You must work with and work for those who care only for the things that perish with the using and to whom the cross that you carry is foolishness.

You must remain simple in purpose, unspoiled by the atmosphere of insincerity which surrounds you — an atmosphere in which men and women make much of the external matters of fashion

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and conventionality, but too often forget the weightier matters of the law—justice, kindness and faith. In the rush of work you must keep faith with your better self which has worshipped God here to-day and has heard His call to service.

And although you endure temptation and remain unchanged in purpose and pure in heart, you will find yourself still bearing after Jesus the cross of a seemingly useless self-sacrifice. When you have given the best that is in you to the correction of some evil or the help of some needy brother, and find your kindness unappreciated and your trust abused, you will know something of the weariness of Him whose days in Jerusalem were crowded with failure, but who from His cross has steadily drawn men to himself.

Sacrifice and service in Bethany or Orange, in Jerusalem or New York, is

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possible only for those who have assured themselves that they are in the place of God's appointment and that, in city or in suburb, they are not alone. They will fail unless their hearts are made strong by the conviction that the battle is not theirs, but God's.

We cannot understand either Jerusalem or Bethany until we remember that somewhere on the road between them was a garden called Gethsemane. There, in the shelter of the gnarled old olive trees, our Master, who had been all day long with men, spoke privately with His Father; there He recovered the vision that the day had dimmed, and, spent with weariness and grief, He found peace and strength by setting His life again in line with the will of God and letting the spirit of His Father have its way in His heart.

If we are to go into the city to give more than we get, we must be steadily

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receiving. In our life must be a Gethsemane where we meet God and, not in a mystical ecstasy, but with a genuinely sincere consecration, set ourselves to do His will. Only when we have learned to know Him there shall we be fit for service yonder, and not until our purposes are purified and our souls made at peace shall we be strong enough for the cross that our Father lays upon us to bear after Jesus.

Life's Fragments

Life's Fragments

JOHN 6: 12. *Gather up the fragments that remain.*

WHAT is one to do as he stands at the close of a year and looks back along a path strewn with the broken remnants of his good intentions? What is to be done in the last days of a twelvemonth whose milestones have been shattered hopes and unfulfilled resolves? Gather up the fragments that remain!

In spite of all that is wonderful and beautiful around us, we live in a very fragmentary world. We call ourselves civilised, but we have only the rudiments of a civilisation, and there are parts of our life that remain much as they were a thousand years ago. We live under imperfect laws which accord protection.

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to some classes and leave others almost uncared for: laws which we enforce by punishments that all too often leave the offender a hardened criminal and send him out of prison more dangerous to his fellowmen than when he entered.

We pride ourselves upon belonging to a Christian nation, yet not the most ardent patriot would claim that the lines upon which municipal or state or national government is run are those that are followed in the commonwealth of heaven. We have grown accustomed to seeing the high ideals and the great principles of our Constitution repeatedly broken to fragments by greed and selfishness until, to our shame, the very name of politics has grown to have an ignoble sound in our ears.

We have been only partly moralised, as we have been finding out in these recent years. We begin to see how fragmentary are our notions of right and

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wrong so long as we apply them to the individual relations of man with man only when the two are in direct contact and do not make them equally binding upon men in their corporate organisations and in all the activities by which they indirectly affect the lives of their fellowmen.

We unhesitatingly condemn slavery, but we include only a small fraction of the world's slaves in our sympathy so long as we are blind to conditions in mines and factories and sweatshops that hold thousands of men and women and even children in hopeless bondage.

We multiply new inventions that annihilate time and space. We are sated with rumours of incredible discoveries. We call nothing impossible. Everything is possible to us save happiness. We have rid ourselves of no burdens, solved none of the old riddles of conduct, achieved no enduring peace of heart.

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We have grown toward maturity in physical things, but in the spiritual world we have made no discoveries that have kept pace with the material miracles that we have wrought.

We have a fragmentary God behind our world. We have made only a partial acquaintance with Him, have only dimly understood His character, only faintly perceived the outlines of His purpose. We talk of His power, but we have never realised the meaning of our words when we say that "His power is love." We give His laws only a partial obedience and a fragmentary application to the problems that meet us in life.

As a result we have a world full of people who are only fragments of what they ought to be: people who physically have never had a chance; men maimed in limb because someone finds it cheaper to maim his employees than to make

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the outlay necessary for safeguarding them,—as in the case of a railroad where a change of grade has made an overhead bridge so dangerously low that it has killed or injured twenty-two men in the past six months, yet the company does nothing. People stunted and dwarfed by the conditions in which they were born and grew up, whose hopeless environment has almost doomed them to wrongdoing; people whose minds have never come to full development, who crowd our asylums and jails; and others who seem to lack any strength of character which can be appealed to—we say of such, “They are not all there.” No, they are only fragments.

People who have known every comfort of life and many of its luxuries, whose bodies have had every chance, who are well kept and attractive, but whose lives are aimless—their parents gave them food and shelter, but forgot their souls—

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have grown up within the limits of conventionalities which narrow and cramp them. They have been taught to look upon their own personal pleasure as the object of existence. They ignore responsibility and find life rather a bore, because they are mere fragments of the men and women God meant them to be.

This general impression of incompleteness which we get from life around us is intensified when we look at ourselves. There is nothing complete about us. How much do we know about this world in which we live ; about the purpose of our being here ; about the forces that work upon us ; about the source of the hopes and fears that rise within us ? We know a little and we guess a great deal, but our knowledge and our guesses put together make only a little headway out into the great sea of the unknown that surrounds us. The most clear eyed

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of men see but as "through a glass, darkly," and there are but few facts of which we can confidently assert, "We know." Now and again we meet someone for whom the fragmentariness of human knowledge has proved too great a strain and who has given up all inquiry, declaring that "all life is a hopeless mystery and this world an unknowable place." We feel absolutely certain of a few personal experiences, but for most of the other things about which we say, "We know," we accept the testimony of other people.

Fragmentary as is our knowledge, it is matched by the incompleteness of our characters. We are only suggestions of our possible better selves. Intended to be sons and daughters of God, we are able to show only a few faint outlines of the divine likeness: the resemblance is so broken and blurred as to be scarcely recognisable. We lack unity. We

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play at cross purposes with ourselves ; to-day, in a moment of rage, tearing to tatters the fabric that yesterday we patiently wove, breaking resolutions by which we have bound ourselves, and wilfully snapping the good habits that have held us. We are spasmodically industrious, intermittently patient, unexpectedly sympathetic, fragmentarily good.

Because there is so much that is inconsistent inside of us, we gain ground by the most erratic advances. We cannot count upon ourselves for steady, unwearying progress ; but if to-day we linger, lazily disinclined to exert ourselves, we know that to-morrow may find us running ahead in great eagerness and that by the next day we may be retracing our steps. If we are enthusiastic to-day, indifference will soon threaten us. If we are brave, prudent self-interest will steal in,

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sapping the root of our courage. Our course in life, instead of being a line steadily advancing toward a goal, is a fever-chart whose zigzag record tells the tale of fluctuating earnestness, of a vitality that has sometimes flared up vigorously only to drop again to low ebb in complete exhaustion.

We never realise this more clearly than when we look back over a year that is closing. To-day twelve months of our journey lie behind us. Its beginning was not so long ago but that we can remember the feelings with which we faced it. We can recall the hopes and fears with which we tried to peer into the future, the eagerness with which we sought to read the meaning that it was to have for us. We promised ourselves so many things that it should bring us. It was to be an epoch in our lives, marked by accomplishments greater than any that the

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years that went before it had ever known. We pledged ourselves to a new steadfastness of purpose, to a new intensity of devotion to duty, to a new sympathy. Our friends should feel able to count upon us, our families should find us unfailingly loving, our work should be pushed with unwearied faithfulness. It should be a year upon which we could look back with some satisfaction and upon whose achievements we could build still greater things in the years to come.

Yet to-day we find ourselves looking back with regret along a way strewn with fragments, — broken promises, unfulfilled ambitions, foundations upon which we never built, duties half done, opportunities wasted. Such are the gifts that the old year leaves us. We carry with us a few precious successes, the memory of days when we were our better selves, when temptation

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seemed to have lost its power over us, when progress was easy and unselfish service was our highest joy. But the most of our endowment is in fragments. What shall we do with them?

The tendency of despair is to throw them away and to start afresh; to make a clean new beginning, unencumbered by these misused opportunities. But if they were waste metal, or refuse ore, or animal by-products, we should never dream of throwing them away, for we have begun to learn the value of such things. Men make fortunes to-day out of the fragments that their fathers discarded as worthless. Great industries spring up founded on by-products. Our manufacturers have begun to outgrow the recklessness characteristic of a new country and to practise economy of waste. The most valuable inventions are often those that find a way of gathering up fragments whose

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worth no one has previously recognised and of using them as raw material for some new process. Thus, in farming, a man does not require a broad stretch of open prairie land whose deep black soil needs only to be turned over and given seed to bring forth a rich harvest. Here and there in the New England hills you find a man who has taken the few acres from which his forefathers wrung a scant living and, by new methods of fertilisation and cultivation, has forced from them a comfortable abundance.

We all learn to do something of this sort with our time. If we wait until we can give our undisturbed leisure to some task that claims us, when is that task ever done? When do we find an uninterrupted morning or afternoon or day to devote to the work in which we are interested? Is it not by economy of the minutes that we succeed in accomplishing anything?

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We learn to gather up the fragments of hours, to utilise the between-times ; for of such fragments life is made up.

“ Forenoon and afternoon and night, — Forenoon
And afternoon, and night, —
Forenoon, and — what !
The empty song repeats itself. No more ?
Yea, that is Life : make this forenoon sublime,
This afternoon a psalm, this night a prayer,
And Time is conquered. . . .”

Conquest in the things of the spirit is born of the same use of fragments, the same economy of waste. We never rid ourselves of our past, for it has become a part of us. We may dream of throwing away all that remains of the unused or misused materials that this year has brought us and of starting out into the new year heart free and unencumbered ; of making a clean sweep and then furnishing ourselves with an entirely new set of motives and resolutions and opportunities. We may dream of it, but we cannot do it.

Life's Fragments

God's laws are not less economical than man's and they forbid the waste. He bids us, "Gather up the fragments."

Our Master's words to His disciples as He looked out over the grass where the multitude had sat and saw the broken remnants of their food are typical of His whole life. He chose always to use the old as His material.

He recognised frankly the fragmentariness of life. He saw the dwarfed lives of the poor and down-trodden, for whose suffering no one seemed to care; He saw the starved hearts of the prosperous churchmen of His day; the warring forces of good and evil which made men's souls their battleground. He saw that fragments of the prophets' hopes yet lingered in the minds of the faithful, that something of the old trust in God survived. He saw these things and He said openly that He had come not to destroy, but to fulfil them. He

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came to complete the imperfect, to gather up the fragments.

He contented himself with the worship of the synagogue, with its ritual of service, with its forms and ceremonies. He went regularly to it on the Sabbath. He remained a synagogue worshipper and a synagogue preacher until He was driven out to the open fields. He disregarded nothing that was of value in the faith of His people, He reinforced the principles that Moses had laid down. He bade men observe the laws that the priests administered.

Wherever He found a fragment of truth He gathered it up into His teaching, so that for almost every truth that He taught we can find some parallel in the teachings of the men of God who had lived before Him. His mission was to assemble these fragments, to put them together for the first time and to complete that which they had promised.

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He took man's imperfect ideas of God — the fragment of God's justice from Amos, a bit of God's forgiveness from Hosea, the thought of God's care for individuals from Jeremiah, the truth of God's world-wide interest from Jonah, — gathered these up into a portrait of God to which He gave the name "Father" and thus revealed to men the God for whom they had long sought and of whom each generation had caught a glimpse.

When Jesus would begin His work He made no high-sounding proclamation concerning the new ideals which He hoped to establish, but went quietly down to the Jordan, allied himself with the followers of John the Baptist, fragmentary as he knew John's revelation to be, and conserved all that was of worth in John's gospel of repentance.

One of His clearest definitions of His purpose in life was that he had "come to

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seek and to save that which was lost." His chief concern was with the wastes of life. He was interested in the fragments of men and women that He saw around Him. Who could have seemed more worthless than the woman who told Him the story of her life at Jacob's well? What sort of material was Zacchæus for God's work? Of what a mass of fragments was Simon Peter made up! How hopeless to try to build anything permanent on such characters as these! Yet Christ gathered them up and found in them a foundation for His church.

He taught that no fragment is too small to be worth saving; that men may be won by redeeming the good that is already in them, by recovering that fragment of God which lies hidden in the heart of every child of our Heavenly Father; that not by some inexplicable change, but by careful mending, lives can be remade. The

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kingdom of heaven of which He spoke shall not come with some miracle in which the fragments with which life is strewn are swept away, but when we shall have learned to seek and save the lost, when we shall have stopped the wastes of life, and shall have redeemed in the spirit of Jesus Christ the broken pieces which we now neglect.

The foundation of our new year must be laid in the fragments that remain from the old. They are too precious to leave behind, even if it were in our power to abandon them; we must gather them up, for they are our endowment for the future.

Perhaps our ideals have been cracked and broken. We have shattered them by repeated unfaithfulness. They proved bothersome in the rush of daily work. We lost sight of them in the struggle. The thought of them brings back memories that are not pleasant for

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us to contemplate; we would forget them if we could, but there they lie, mere fragments of what they might have become if we had been steadfast to them. They may be only fragments, but whatever of value there is in them is imperishable; we must gather them up.

If we have lost our grip upon purposes to which we once held firmly and endeavoured to devote ourselves sincerely; if we have broken again and again resolutions in which we have pledged ourselves to be nobler, truer, more unselfish, more Christlike; if our wills have proved unequal to the burden and snapped beneath the strain that we put upon them: let us not give up the effort and abandon the struggle. Let us gather together the fragments that remain to us and make with them a new beginning.

Perhaps you read recently of the suicide in the East River of a young man, the only clues to whose identity

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were two letters found in the pocket of the coat which he left on the riverbank. One pleaded with him to come home, reminding him that "a single misstep did not mean the end of everything," that he might bravely redeem his reputation, and that those who loved him would stand by him. It was postmarked with the name of an old New England town, and the letter closed with the words, "Return at Christmas time another man and make home indeed happy for your mother." But his mother looked for him in vain, and Christmas Day found the boy's body afloat in the river, drifting out toward the sea. The fragments of his past had been too much for him. He could not gather them together and begin anew, so he gave up the struggle and threw himself away.

We can give up the struggle without suicide. We can throw ourselves away without getting even a paragraph in the

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newspaper. We need only let the fragments accumulate, make no further effort to reach a higher level in life, dream of no victories over evil in the new year, be dragged under by the weight of the promises which we once made to God and to ourselves, but in steady succession have broken. The current runs on and it is easy to drown if one will not swim.

There are other fragments than these of unrealised purposes. Your purpose may hold firm, but perhaps your heart has been broken. The year may have taken from you someone whom you loved, for whose happiness you delighted to plan, and whose going has meant the breaking of ties that withstood every strain that life put upon them, but were powerless to resist death. Or, worse than death, you may be heart-broken over the suffering of someone dear to you, whose burden of pain or misfortune or overwork you are unable to

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lighten; or, love may have been shattered by faithlessness; affection may have been betrayed and selfishness have broken the bond of friendship. There seems so little left upon which you can fasten your love that you find life turning bitter: there can be no Happy New Year for you. None, unless you gather up the fragments of love that still remain. There may be little left, but there is always enough to live by until time begins to heal the break and you rediscover that love of God which is never worn out by the passing months, which is never absent in sorrow, which can mend broken hearts and make even New Years into which you go with a feeling of loneliness full of lasting happiness.

We may be heart whole, but our lives may seem to have accomplished little; looking backwards we cannot see that our twelve months of service have made

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any impression upon the tasks that we have undertaken. We have been working away with a Sunday-school class and results have been desperately small; we cannot see any changed lives as the fruit of our labours. But into some girl's heart a lesson has gone home with a force that will fix it there for her whole lifetime; some boy has been held to an allegiance to Christ which will later develop into personal faith in Him. Seeds have been planted of whose growth we can judge nothing. All that we have done looks incomplete and imperfect, but let us gather up the fragments that we can find and carry them on as capital for larger undertakings and more earnest endeavours in the coming year.

Whatever be our fragments — whether unkept promises or shattered ideals or broken hearts or unfulfilled hopes or partial successes — despise them not, for the stuff of which such things are made

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is from God. Gather them up in His name. For of these we must build the foundation of a glad New Year.

In connection with Lincoln Cathedral the story is told of an artist who was sent down from London to set up a great window. As he fitted it to the curves of the old stone casement there were left here and there bits of broken glass for which there was no room, and the artist threw them down at the foot of the wall, until a pile had accumulated on the floor. His apprentice, a young lad, begged for the broken pieces of the coloured glass, and while his employer was still busy at his work, went off to a corner of the great church and there, where a patch of sunlight lay upon the stone floor, began arranging the pieces as pleased his fancy. When a little later his employer sought him he found him on his knees before a combination of the coloured bits whose beauty

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ravished the eye and drew from the artist the cry, "The boy! he is the master; for he has taken the fragments that I threw away and has made of them a window more beautiful than mine!"

There is One who can take the fragments of our past — the elements of our personality which we have been wasting, the promises which we have broken, the ideals which we have failed to realise — and out of them create a life lovely with His own incomparable beauty. Our Lord: He is the Master.

Passages from Prayers

Passages from Prayers

GOD of unchanging kindness, whose love doth lavish upon us the gifts that fill our days with happiness, our lives with praise, we give Thee thanks for all Thy goodness.

O Thou who dost not content thyself with beholding from heaven the sons of men, but dost come to earth, tirelessly working to establish among them Thy kingdom, make plain Thy way, we beseech Thee, before all who are astray in life. May this be the generation of them that seek Thee and that will not rest until Thou art known of them.

We pray for all who find life a long, hard road for weary feet. May any whose spirits are flagging, whose enthusiasms are growing cold, whose joy is deserting them, regain their gladness of heart by recovering Thy companionship. For those who fight losing battles we ask strength; for those who run

Passages from Prayers

away from opportunities which they ought to accept we ask courage; for all who in their happiness and prosperity grow careless of those whom they might help, we ask thoughtfulness and sympathy; for those unstable in faith, that they may set Thee at their right hand and never be moved.

Our hearts sing, O Lord, with Thy goodness. We recount Thy mercies to us and wonder at the richness of life. Teach us how good a thing it is to give Thee thanks. We praise Thee for a world full of problems to be solved, of noble work to be done and of wide-open doors of opportunity to be entered.

Increase, we pray Thee, the spirit of unity throughout Thy church; help those who love Jesus Christ to understand one another better and to work with singleness of purpose for Him. Save us from all false emphasis, from devoting time to interests to which He was indifferent.

We pray for all men bound in ignorance of Thy true character who yet blindly seek

Passages from Prayers

for that which is higher and better than they. As we repeatedly pray "Thy kingdom come" show us, we beseech Thee, the ways in which it may be brought near to men. Make us interested in everything that tends to hasten its progress. May we make its principles of kindness and justice and brotherly service our programme for life, and may all who love the truth and hate evil rally in increasing numbers to fight its battles.

Save us from ignoble contentment; from being satisfied with any less perfect a world than one in which our Father's character shall be reflected in all our human relationships.

We give Thee thanks for a world in which we have enough, yet not too much to long for more; a world that always rewards our search; that presents to us tasks worth the investment of a lifetime of service; that surrounds us with countless brothers and sisters in whom we find some of the nobility and love and friendship of our Heavenly Father.

Almighty and Everlasting God, the comfort of the sad, the strength of the sufferer,

Passages from Prayers

the stay of the faint in heart, we leave in Thy keeping any who may be in sorrow and all who must stand by and watch while those they love draw near to the quiet valley. . . . By channels which we can but dimly trace Thou canst send out Thy comfort in healing streams. Be with all who stand in danger of that more awful death, — the death of all aspiration and endeavour after God, final surrender to the forces that oppose Thee. Succour the tempted ere they yield, comfort the disheartened before they despair, startle the careless before they grow incapable of hearing Thy voice.

Fire with fresh enthusiasm the church of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that all men who call themselves His followers may be so filled with His spirit of loving service that none may doubt the reality of their acquaintance with Him. Save us from all formalism, from meaningless profession. Make Thy church a more aggressive force throughout the world, more alert in Thy service, more whole-heartedly devoted to the establishment

Passages from Prayers

of that kingdom of heaven which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Teach us to forget ourselves as we remember the needs of others. Save us from pride if we be prosperous; from despair if we be in want; from selfishness if we be happy; from bitterness if we be in distress. Make us to know that as we have taken upon us the name of Christ we must bear the yoke, His badge of service, and remind us that by our lives men judge not us, but Him.

Lord of the hearts of men, who hast created us in Thine own image and hast given us part ownership of this world of Thine, make Thy sons true to their Father's trust. May the spirit of brotherhood become their court of last appeal. May injustice toward the weak and all selfish indifference to the needs of others and all prejudices that separate men from one another and from Thee grow steadily less. May Thy purposes ripen fast and Thy kingdom for which we long soon come everywhere.

Passages from Prayers

We give Thee thanks for the variety of Thy blessings, for the unexpectedness of Thy gifts. We easily count our sorrows, but our joys are innumerable.

O Thou to whose Fatherly eyes all men appear as Thy sons, in whose presence the things in which we are different disappear and the ties of our common humanity become clearly seen, fashion the hearts of all Thy children according to the likeness of Thy best-beloved Eldest Son. Help us as we master more and more of the secrets of the earth in which we live,—so that the rocks yield us their riches and the seas grow narrow and the currents of the air obey our bidding,—to learn also those greater secrets of life which have been the desire of all men who have loved the truth.

Save us from losing the freshness of life, from taking Thy mercies as matters of course and growing too dim of vision to see Thee always behind and in the things which Thou dost send.

Passages from Prayers

Almighty and ever blessed God, who dost know us not as strangers, but as dear children; in whom we find that perfect love that casteth out fear, so that we cannot be afraid though the earth do change and the mountains be moved; teach us in all the fortunes of our journey to trust Thee. Grant us, Thy servants, quietness of heart, assurance of Thy goodness, reliance upon Thy love. Answer Thou the unspoken desires of our hearts, speak comfort to us through the voice of Thy Holy Word, and strengthen us with such faith in Him who, having won the battle of life, vanquished death, that we may be more than conquerors.

In Memoriam

In Memoriam

CONSTRAINED by the strong and abiding love which grew up between our late pastor, Rev. Robert Service Steen, and his people, during his brief but fruitful pastorate, the Hillside Presbyterian Church, of Orange, New Jersey, places upon its records this memorial of his life and gracious ministry.

He was born May 5, 1880. At the age of twenty-one he graduated from Princeton University in the class of 1901. The following three years he spent as a teacher at Beirut Protestant College in Syria. Returning to this country, he entered Union Theological Seminary, from which he graduated May, 1907. He was unanimously called to the pastorate of this church June 26, 1907, and entered upon his duties September 30

In Memoriam

of the same year. Death came to him with startling suddenness April 18, 1908.

Coming to us in the young manhood of an unsullied life, he revealed the ripe experience of a matured Christian character. He accepted his responsible office with whole-hearted earnestness and enthusiasm, and very soon the impress of his sanctified personality was manifest in all departments of our church. He was a man with a mission. His conception of Christian discipleship was consecrated service to his fellowmen. His religious convictions were optimistic, cheerful, hopeful and fitted to every phase of human intercourse. He exemplified to us the pure motives of a Christ-like man, in immediate touch with our homes, our social circles and the currents of everyday life in our community.

The maturity of his mind was manifested in the depth and scope of his

In Memoriam

pulpit teaching, which has made a profound impression on the lives of his people. With modesty of demeanour, and yet with a clear vision most unusual, he has expounded to us the living truths of God's revealed word so earnestly and lovingly that we have had a revelation of our Saviour's spirit abiding in our midst.

In loving fellowship with children has been revealed his tenderness and purity of heart, and his thoughts for them in the public services of our church have been a sanctifying influence to young and old.

With cheerfulness and serene patience he endured physical pain and the strain of an obstinate illness during the last weeks of life. His only anxiety was the thought that he might be interrupted in his work. With the spirit and courage of a hero, he strove to leave nothing undone, but laboured manfully until the

In Memoriam

command of his physician compelled him to suspend the activity of pastoral oversight.

We have learned in the brief period of a few months to love him because by a beautiful life of consecration he has revealed loyal attachment to his Saviour and a constant effort to be like Him.

We extend to his family our fellowship of sorrow, and share with them the sweet memory of a consecrated life of service on earth and the hope of a sanctified reunion in our Father's home in heaven.

SESSION

I. REMSEN LANE	T. STALLKNECHT
ALBRIDGE C. SMITH	WILLIAM BARR
LOWRY E. B. CRAIG	E. HUBERT ALLEN
J. R. T. MCCARROLL	NORMAN M. WARD
J. H. GIFFIN	STANLEY WHITE, Moderator

DEACONS

WALTER N. VAIL	JOHN HECTOR
F. W. GIFFIN	ROBERT A. YOUNG

In Memoriam

TRUSTEES

CLARENCE D. NEWELL	BLEECKER VAN WAGENEN
ISAAC C. OGDEN	DICKINSON W. RICHARDS
T. A. GILLESPIE	J. W. SPENCER
H. B. MARCH	SOLOMON H. HOWE

Orange, New Jersey
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